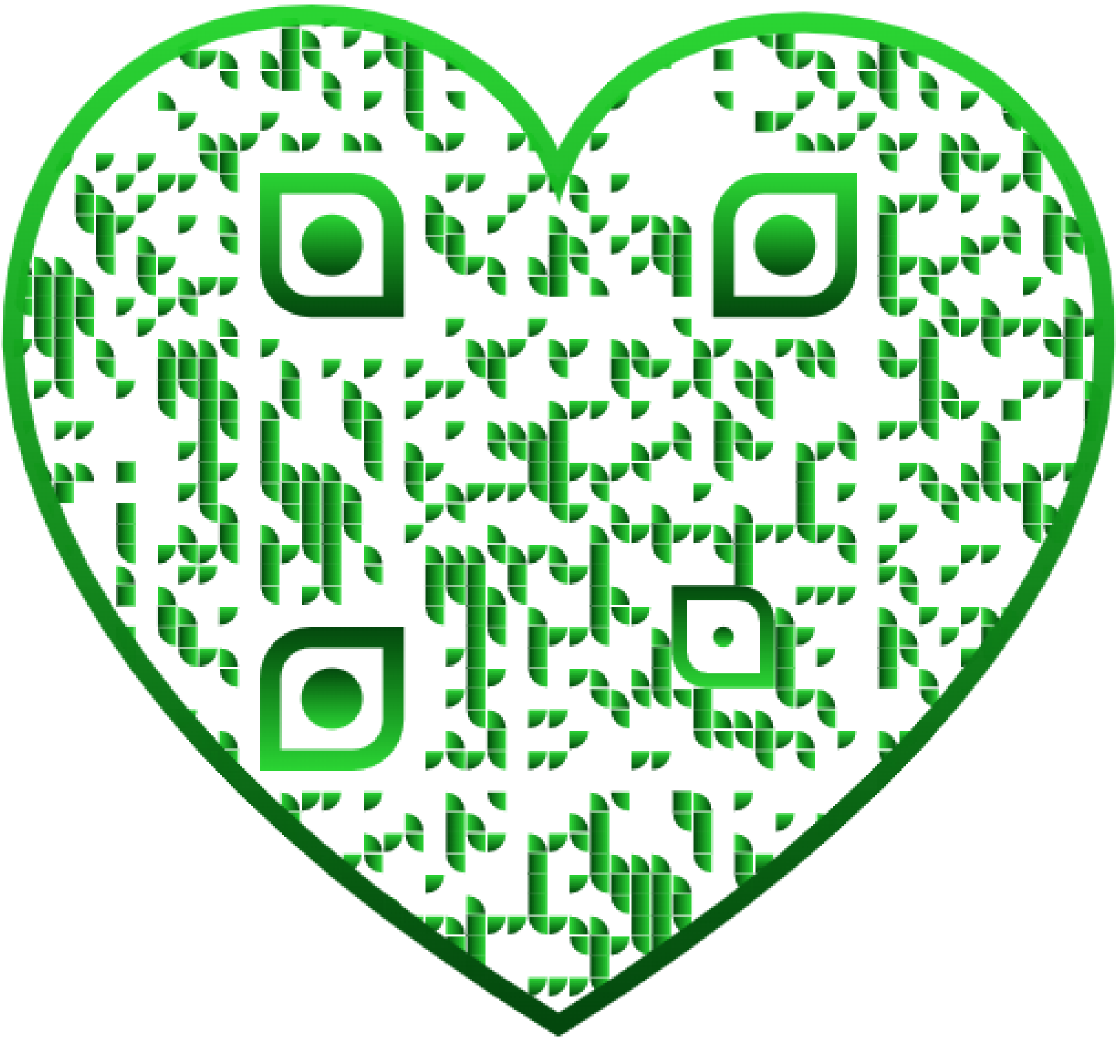
BBC

Year Planner 2025

YOUR MONTH-BY-MONTH GUIDE TO GARDENING SUCCESS

BBC Gardeners' World magazine **GUIDE**

- ✔ Star blooms for all seasons
- ✔ Handy monthly checklists
- ✔ Tips to save time and money
- ✔ Enjoy homegrown harvests



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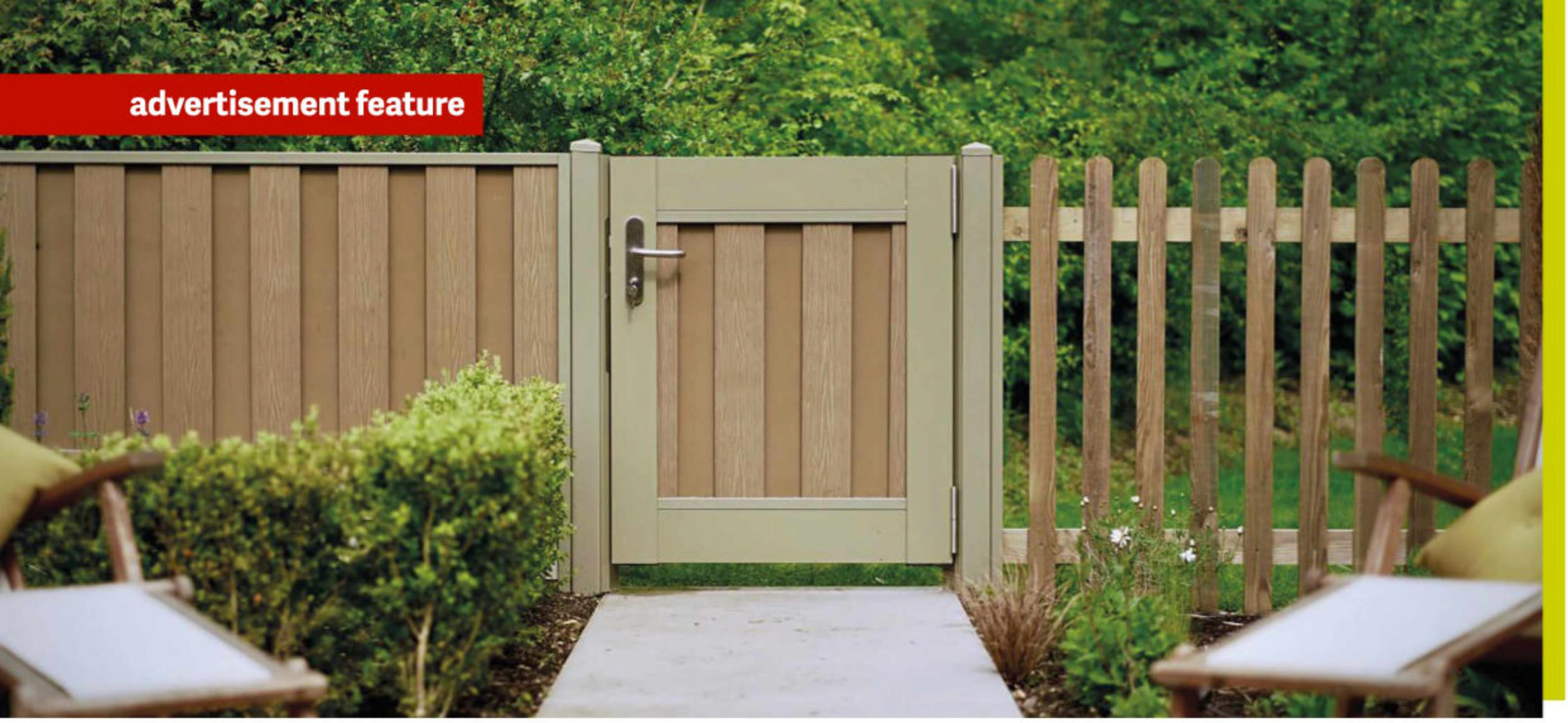

Push the boundaries

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Welcome

Get ready to make 2025 your best year in the garden. Whether that means creating beautiful borders, brightening up a doorstep with a few containers or growing something to eat, you'll find all the help and advice you need in this special edition.

Your month-by-month guide will keep you on track with handy checklists of essential tasks – always be on top of what to prune, sow, plant and harvest – and you'll find space to make notes so you can record progress.

Maybe it's time to grow something new? If so, you'll find our pick of star plants every month, all guaranteed to put on beautiful displays. And don't worry if you're tight on time or budget as we've included plenty of handy tips to make the most of both.

If you're a wildlife lover, you'll find plenty of ways to make your plot a haven for beneficial creatures. And look out for our monthly recipes to help you make the most of your homegrown harvests.

So, whatever the gardening year holds in store, I hope your *Year Planner 2025* will be the perfect companion. Happy gardening!

Kevin

Kevin Smith,
Editor, *BBC Gardeners' World Magazine*

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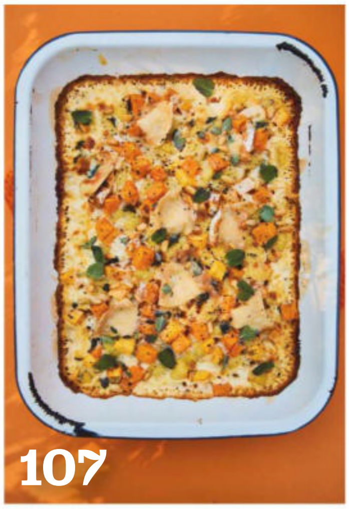

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Tidy up the greenhouse for winter and rake up fallen leaves to make nutritious leafmould

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Discover when to sow your flower and veg seeds this year with our comprehensive calendar, whether you want to grow colourful annuals for summer flowers, or bumper vegetable crops in containers

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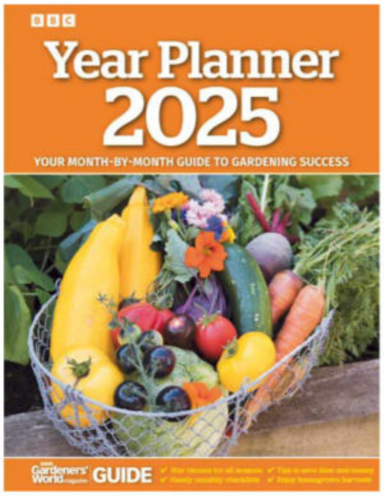
Find out everything you need to know for a year in the garden with this guide to our planner


BBC
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2025
YOUR MONTH-BY-MONTH GUIDE TO GARDENING SUCCESS
Gardeners' World
GUIDE

Cover photo by Sarah Cuttle

January

This month may be quieter than some in the garden, but this makes it the ideal time to plan for the year ahead. Kickstart 2025 by testing your soil to help choose the right plants for your borders, potting up summer bulbs, sowing sweet peas indoors and cooking up some delicious garden-fresh kale

Key task

Leave the seedheads of plants such as ***Telekia speciosa*** standing over winter to add architectural interest to your borders

Monthly round up...

January is a good month to get essential pruning done, as well as plan for spring planting. At this cold time of year, with few berries around, it's also a key month to feed birds and ensure your bird bath is free of ice.

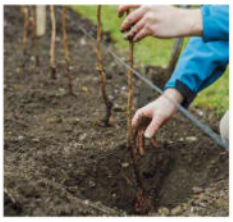
Prune

- Autumn-fruiting raspberries
- Climbing roses
- Fruit bushes – gooseberries, blackcurrants and redcurrants
- Grapevines – before sap starts rising
- Wisteria

Sow

Indoors

- Begonias
- Cabbages
- Chillies
- Lettuce
- Lobelia
- Onions
- Pelargoniums
- Spinach
- Sweet peas



Plant

- Bare-root fruit trees and bushes
- Bare-root hedging and trees
- Bare-root roses
- Evergreen shrubs
- Garlic
- Shallots (under cover)
- Winter bedding (violas, cyclamen, heathers)

Harvest

- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbages
- Cavolo nero
- Celeriac
- Jerusalem arthichokes
- Kale
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Sprouting broccoli
- Turnips

W **1** NEW YEAR'S DAY BANK HOLIDAY UK
T **2** BANK HOLIDAY SCOTLAND
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F **31**

This month's

Star plants

1 *Daphne bholua* 'Gurkha'
There is a daphne for most situations – this is one of the larger varieties. The flowers are pleasantly pink but that is not the main reason for growing this shrub. It's the sweet scent wafting through the crisp winter air. Give it some shade, and shelter from cold winds.
Flowers Jan-Feb
Height x Spread 2m x 1.5m

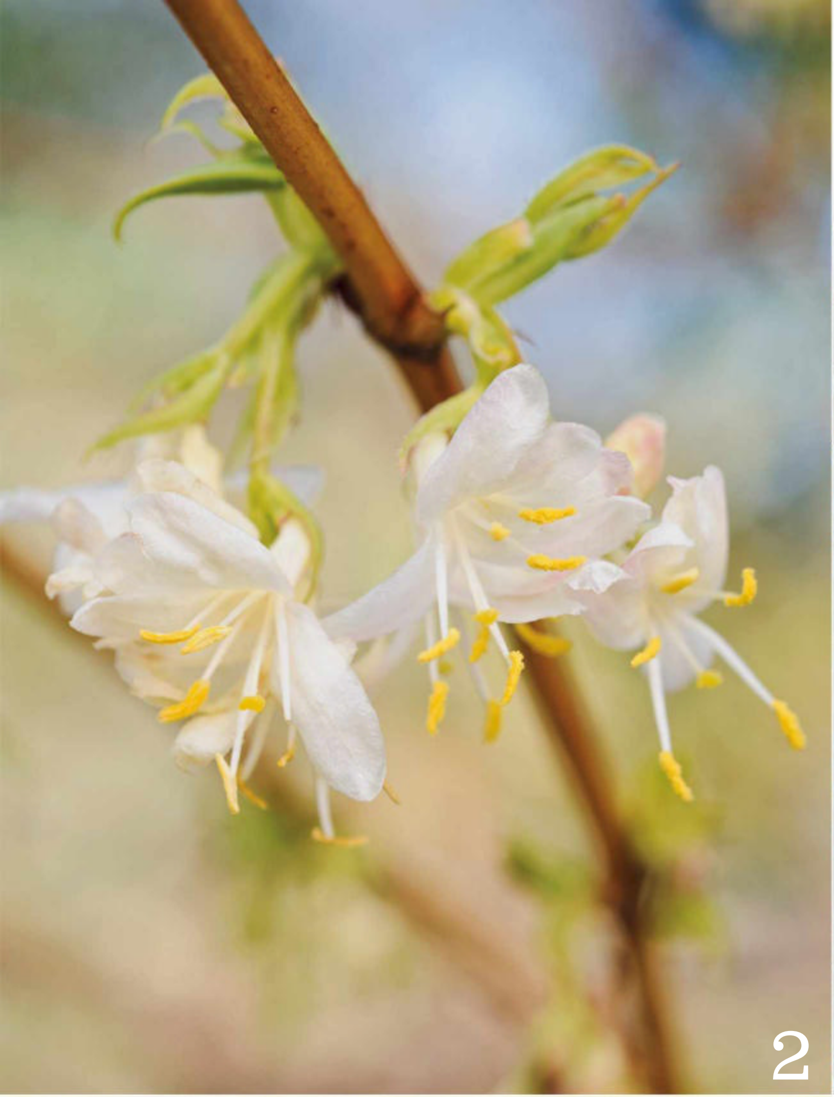
2 *Lonicera* x *purpusii* 'Winter Beauty'
Winter honeysuckle is a deciduous shrub with scented flowers on bare branches from late winter. The flowers are a good source of nectar for early bumblebees when not many other plants are in flower. The green foliage appears later, as the weather warms up.
F Dec-Mar **H x S** 2m x 2.5m

3 *Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star'.
Dwarf conifers are hardy and adaptable. There are varieties that make colourful and intriguing small garden specimens, while some are good for containers and for low hedges. This variety has short, pointed, silvery-blue leaves that build into a dense, compact plant. It looks pretty planted alongside species crocus.
H x S 40cm x 1m

4 Violas
Hardy violas are often grown as annual bedding, with winter-flowering forms making a colourful addition to containers. There are always packs at the garden centre or you can try a specific variety such as 'Sorbet XP Neptune' (pictured) or the yellow 'Tiger Eyes'.
F Nov-Apr **H x S** 15cm x 20cm

5 *Erica carnea*
The lime-tolerant winter heather, *Erica carnea* is perhaps the most widely grown dwarf evergreen in the world and is 100 per cent winter hardy anywhere in the UK. Its flowers are long-lasting dainty bells in red, pink or white, set against needle-like evergreen foliage.
F Jan-Mar **H x S** 15cm x 45cm

1



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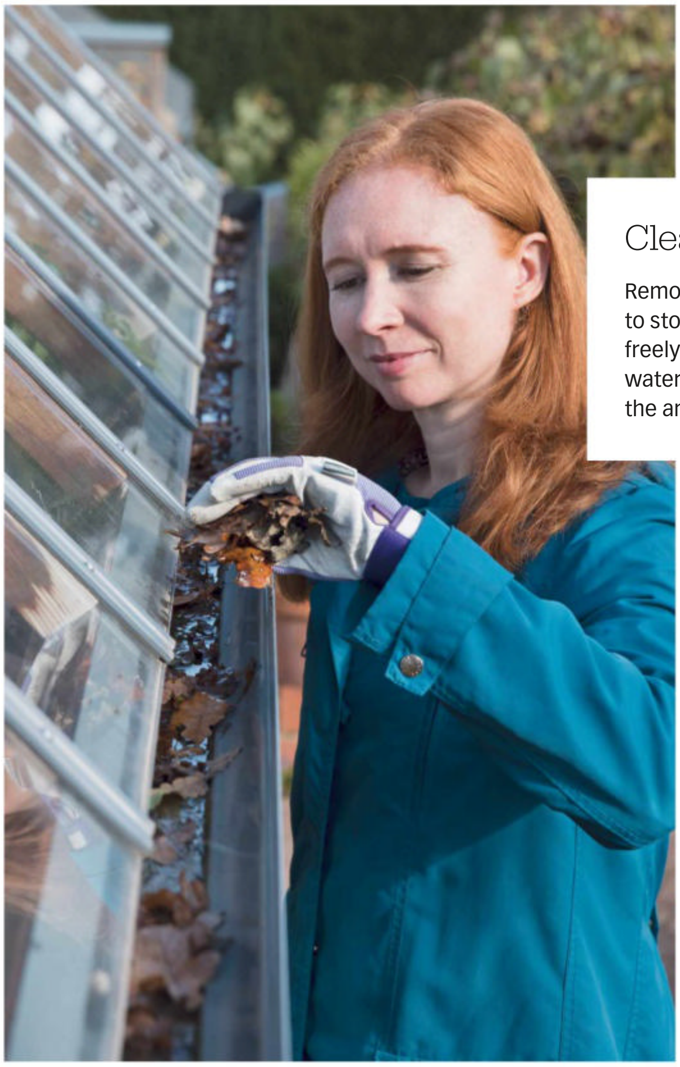
What to do now...

around the garden

10 min task

Check any rooted cuttings for signs of fungal disease and pinch out any affected growth that you notice



Clear greenhouse gutters

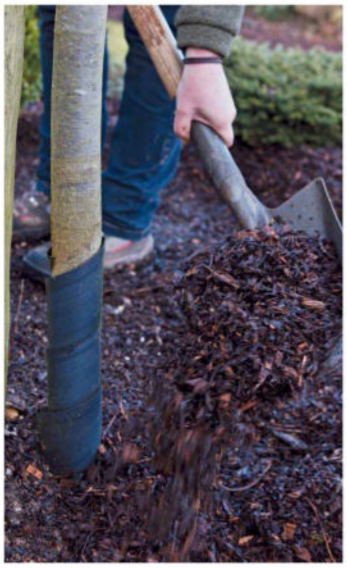
Remove fallen leaves and debris from greenhouse gutters to stop them overflowing and to allow rainwater to flow freely into your water butts. This is a messy job so wear waterproof gloves. Keeping gutters clear also reduces the amount of moss and algae that can build up in them.

Turn your compost heap

Speed up your compost production by turning the heap to move the cool outer layers into the middle. Doing this aerates the heap and speeds up decomposition. Although the material will all break down eventually, if you don't turn your heap the results are less even and much slower.

Mulch around trees

Mulch trees now when the soil moisture content is at its peak and before the trees start to draw water out of the surrounding ground as they begin growing again in spring. First, weed the base of the tree and water if the weather has been dry for a while. Next, pour on a 5cm thick layer of homemade compost, leafmould or rotted manure. Make sure that the compost doesn't touch the woody trunk because it will rot the bark and eventually damage the tree's ability to supply water up through to the leaves.



Test your soil

Do a pH test to find out how acidic or alkaline your soil is. This will help you make decisions about planting, liming or what organic matter is best to use on your patch. Focus on new areas or parts of the veg garden where you add manure and fertiliser. Take samples at root level, test them separately and label where they came from.

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Help the birds

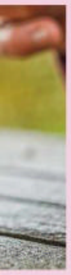
Birds have few daylight hours to find food, and stores of berries have mostly been eaten so this is a key time to feed birds. Supplementary food such as sunflower hearts and suet nibbles offer a lifeline, along with a dish of fresh water. Make sure feeders and bird baths are spotlessly clean to prevent the spread of disease. For migrant birds less used to human contact, leave small amounts of food in secluded places.

Improve lawn drainage

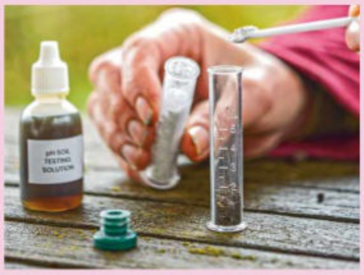
Aerate the lawn by making holes in the areas where water puddles quickly and on routes where foot traffic is causing soil compaction. Push a fork into the ground at 10cm intervals or use a hollow tine aerator, which pulls plugs of soil right out. Brush sharp sand into the holes on heavy soil or use loam on sandy soils to improve drainage and fertility. Rake off any debris and try to give the area a rest from footfall while the grass roots in and recovers.

Other tasks to do...

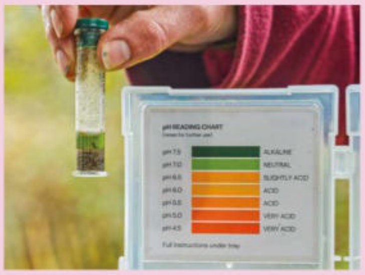
- Defrost bird baths
- Cut back the old stems of grasses such as miscanthus
- Clean up pots and seed trays ready for spring
- Service your mower and clean tools
- Remove old leaves from hellebores



1 Dry the soil sample and sieve it. Use a small spatula to put the soil in the jar up to the mark indicated in the instructions.



2 Add the correct amount of barium sulphate powder and mix to clean the soil particles, making the results easier to read.



3 Mix in the indicator solution and shake thoroughly so all the particles are dispersed. Match the colour to the pH reading.

What to do now...

in your flower patch

Sow sweet peas

Sow sweet peas and grow them on gently without heat in a cold frame, windowsill or cold greenhouse. Seedlings will strengthen in spring and can be planted outside for flowers all summer.

1

Soak seeds overnight somewhere warm indoors, on damp kitchen paper or moist vermiculite. Cover them with a lid to prevent drying out.

2

Sow seeds in deep pots of peat-free multi-purpose compost at a depth of 2.5cm. Alternatively sow single seeds in 9cm pots to save potting on later.

3

Label pots, water, then place in a sheltered corner.

Refresh containers

Add hardy flowering cyclamen to your winter pots to fill any gaps and brighten up the display. You'll find several types in all shades, from deep red to pinks and white. Go for those that survive outdoors – you'll find the tender ones in the house plant department. Cyclamen do best in moisture-retentive compost and out of full sun. Use a trowel to make a hole and press in the rootball firmly before watering the compost to settle them in.

Pot up lily bulbs

Choose a deep pot to plant up some lily bulbs for summer. To plant several bulbs you will need a pot that's wide enough to leave a 5cm space between each bulb. For single bulbs, the pot should ideally be roughly double the diameter of the bulb. Fill the pot with a mix of loam-based John Innes and peat-free potting compost. Good drainage with a rich supply of nutrients is key to success. Plant bulbs at a depth the same as the height of the bulb. Water, then place on blocks to allow good drainage.

Top tip

Now is the month to prune wisteria. Reduce all sideshoots to two or three buds from the base to encourage plump flower buds to form

Prune shrub roses

Prune shrub roses now while they are still dormant, but just before growth resumes. Roses shoot early so pruning now before they shoot, rather than later in spring, avoids the plant wasting its energy. Remove all the prunings and make sure that none of last year's leaves are left on the plant. This reduces any chances of the disease infecting the new season's growth.

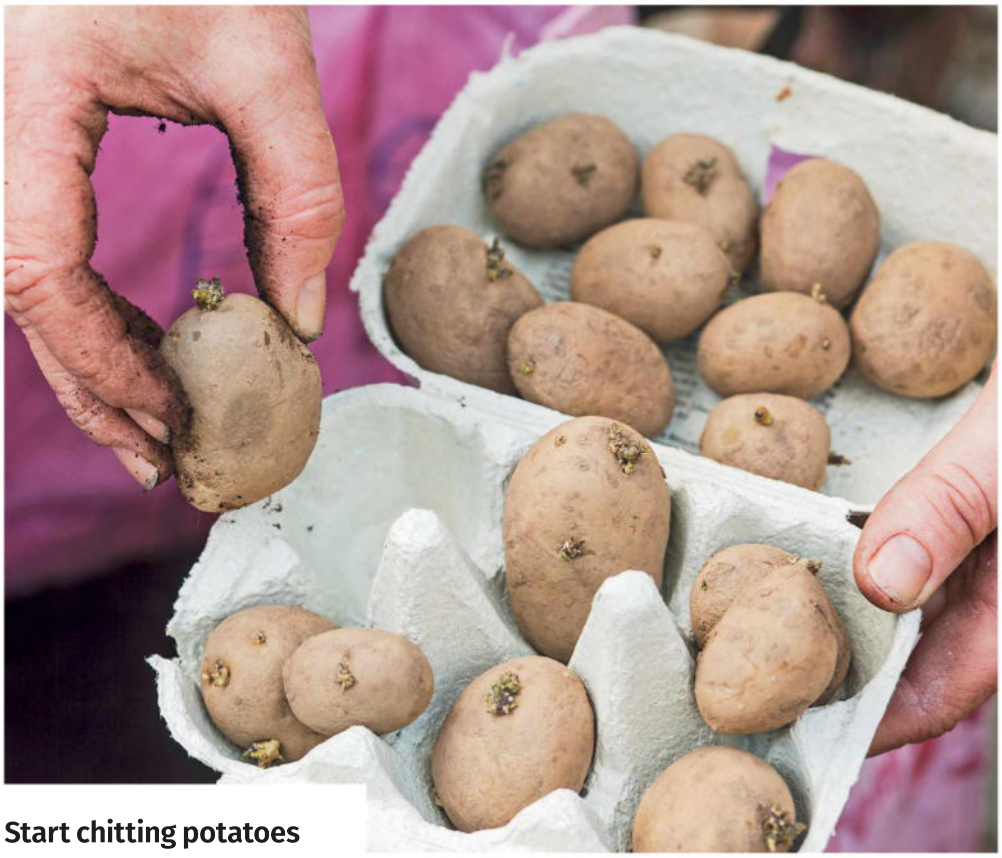
- Reduce the height of the shrub by one third. This may mean only trimming the longest stems. Step back to check the shape.
- Identify damaged stems or those growing across each other and cut those out to improve light and airflow in the plant's centre.
- Use loppers to remove old shoots that are no longer supporting vigorous growth.

Other tasks to do...

- **Plant bare-root roses**
- **Plan out what you will plant in different spots this spring**
- **Check any stored summer bulbs for rot**
- **Take root cuttings of oriental poppies**
- **Move bulbs in pots into the greenhouse to speed up flowering**

What to do now...

growing your own



Start chitting potatoes

First early potatoes will usually be planted between mid March and mid April, depending on your location, so now can be a good time to start chitting them in preparation. Place them upright in an egg box with space between them, with the old withered stem facing down and emerging chits or buds near the top. Keep them somewhere light and cold but frost-free for six weeks. It's best to have them up on a bench out of reach of hungry vermin.

Top tip

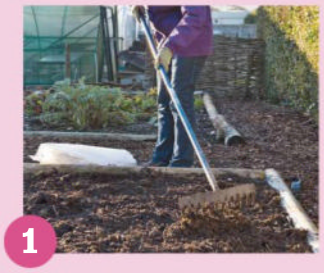
Clear foliage at the base of leafy crops such as chard and spinach to see if there are any slugs sheltering beneath them

Check brassica netting

Make sure brassica netting is weighed down properly around beds to protect crops. Brassicas are one of the few crops that you can keep picking through the 'hungry gap' until spring crops are ready, but pigeons will make a beeline for them at this time of year, when there is little else around. They will land on the ground and walk in if there are no obvious perches, so make sure the crop is completely covered over a frame that's tall enough to allow plants to reach their full height.

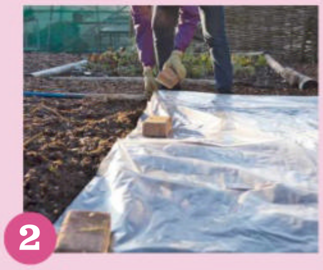
Warm up seedbeds

Cover seed beds with clear polythene to get them ready for sowing a couple of weeks ahead of the rest. It helps to increase soil temperature and also restrict weeds. Glass is easily the best material for trapping radiant heat but clear polythene from old packaging does well, too, raising the temperature by a degree or two. It will also prevent waterlogging, so when removed you have friable soil to sow into.



1

Rake the soil to a fine, level tilth. This stops rainwater puddling in any dips and makes spring sowing easier.



2

Weigh one end down with bricks, then pull the cover taut before weighing down the other end, and finally the sides.

Other tasks to do...

- Prune autumn-fruiting raspberry canes, cutting them down to the ground
- Earth up or stake Brussels sprout plants to stop them from rocking in strong winds
- Continue planting fruit trees and bushes unless soil is frozen or waterlogged
- Plant new rhubarb crowns or lift and divide old ones to increase vigour

Crop of the month

Kale

Sow March to June
Harvest September to March

Kale played a key role in the Dig for Victory campaign during the Second World War, because it was so easy to grow. It also provided nutrients missing from diets due to rationing. It is packed with iron, calcium and folic acid and is high in vitamins A, C and K. It is also rich in lutein, an antioxidant that keeps eyes healthy. Try sprinkling the smallest, tenderest kale leaves raw on salads. Mature kale is a versatile vegetable, delicious in soups, with pasta or roasts, or simply steamed, shredded and fried in butter and garlic.

HARVESTING

Pick individual leaves when they are no more than 15cm long (the bigger they are, the tougher they get). Cut the whole central crown from curly kales and they will re-sprout to provide a second crop of leafy shoots. Kale keeps in the fridge for two or three days – leave it much longer and it turns bitter. Freeze the leaves after blanching briefly in boiling water.

OUR CHOICES

'Dwarf Green Curled' (lower growing), 'Red Russian' (best for baby-leaf salads), 'Redbor' (crinkly, burgundy leaves).

Pasta with kale, chilli and mascarpone

The anchovies in the sauce are subtle but important; they won't taste fishy but instead give an intense savoury edge that stands up to the slightly bitter greens. If you're looking for a simple way to serve kale as a side, make the mascarpone sauce as below, and toss with steamed kale. SERVES 4

- 4 anchovies in oil, drained
- 1 red chilli, thinly sliced (deseeded if you don't like it too hot)
- Zest and juice 1 lemon
- ½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ x 250g tub mascarpone
- 250g kale, large stalks removed, leaves shredded
- 25g Grana Padano, finely grated

1 Using a large saucepan, boil the pasta in salted water following pack instructions and setting a timer. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large frying pan, add the anchovies and chilli and fry gently for a couple of minutes, stirring now and again, until the anchovies dissolve completely in the oil. Stir in the lemon zest and nutmeg and sizzle for a few seconds. Stir in the mascarpone and half the lemon juice, then remove from the heat.

2 When the pasta has four minutes left, push the kale into the pan, a handful at a time. It will wilt down quickly. Boil until kale is tender and the pasta al dente. Reserve 200ml of the pasta cooking water, then drain. Tip the pasta and kale into the mascarpone pan, add the grated cheese and 100ml pasta water, then toss it all together. Add a splash of water if the pasta seems dry. Season to taste.

WHY NOT TRY...

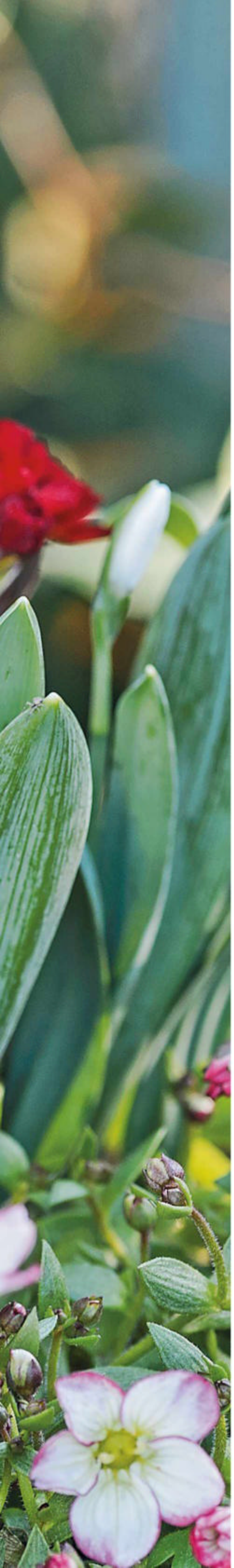
Making pesto from kale for an easy pasta dish or using up kale in a winter salad

Key task

Add some instant colour to the patio by filling pots with cheerful primulas, snowdrops and saxifrages, which can be planted into the garden later

February

February may not be any warmer than January, but it's getting lighter and the gardening job list is getting longer. As the first spring bulbs begin to emerge, it's time to start sowing seed indoors, tidy up perennials, cut back clematis – and why not try something new, like creating a terrarium for an exciting indoor display



This month's round up...

February is a key month to finish pruning roses and late-summer flowering shrubs such as buddleia, but it's also a good time to plant bare-root perennials and trees, and order plants for any new borders or planting displays.

Prune

- Buddleias – cut back hard
- Deciduous hedges
- Hardy fuchsias
- Late-flowering clematis
- Old, overgrown shrubs
- Roses – bush, shrub and climbers

Sow

Indoors

- Chillies
- Leeks
- Sweet peas
- Tomatoes

Outdoors

- Broad beans
- Carrots
- Salad onions

Plant

- Jerusalem artichokes
- Lily of the valley
- Potted bulbs in flower
- Rhubarb
- Shallots
- Summer-flowering bulbs

Harvest

- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbages
- Forced rhubarb
- Kale
- Parsnips
- Purple sprouting broccoli
- Swiss chard

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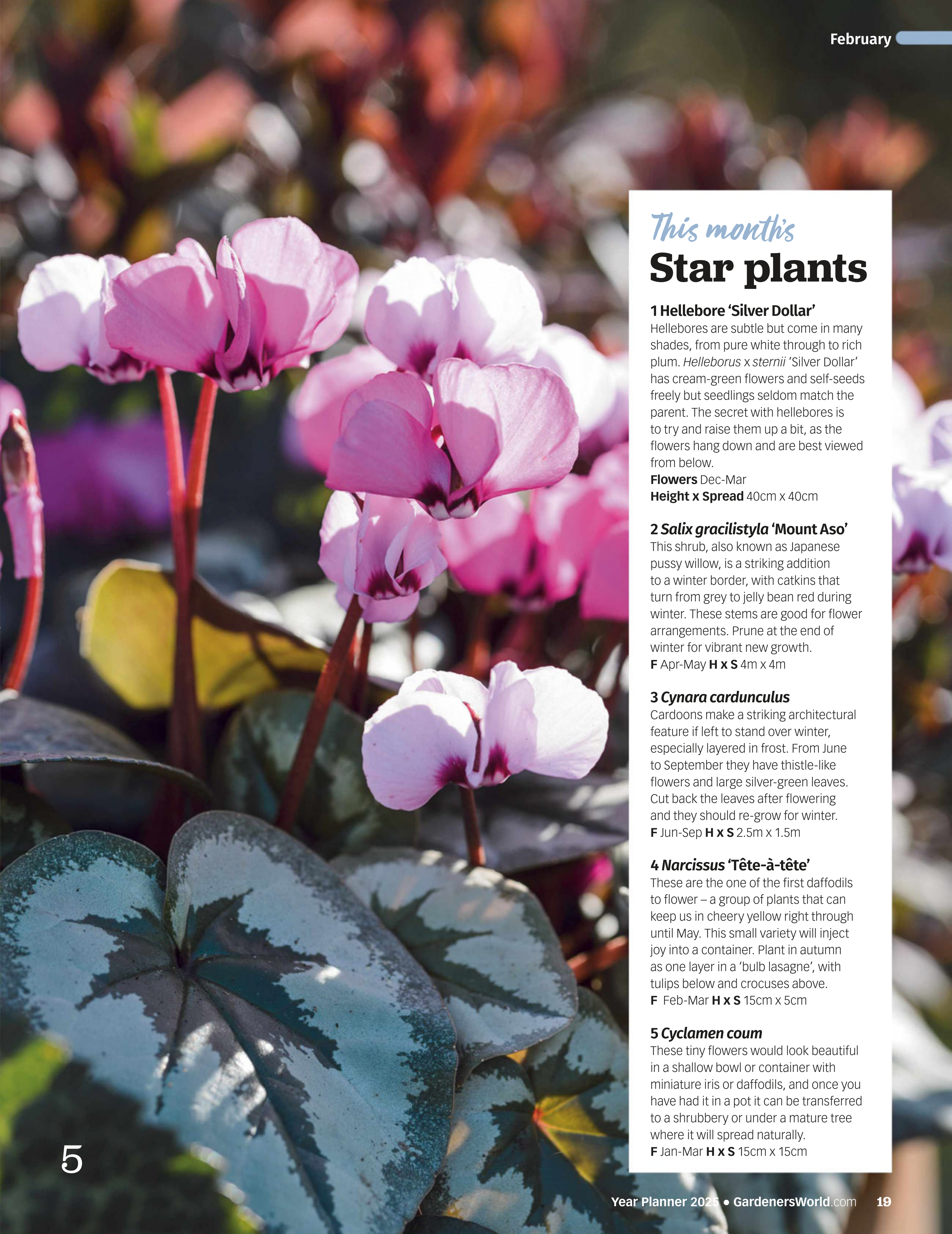


This month's
Star plants

1 Hellebore 'Silver Dollar'

Hellebores are subtle but come in many shades, from pure white through to rich plum. *Helleborus* x *sternii* 'Silver Dollar' has cream-green flowers and self-seeds freely but seedlings seldom match the parent. The secret with hellebores is to try and raise them up a bit, as the flowers hang down and are best viewed from below.

Flowers Dec-Mar
Height x Spread 40cm x 40cm

2 *Salix gracilistyla* 'Mount Aso'

This shrub, also known as Japanese pussy willow, is a striking addition to a winter border, with catkins that turn from grey to jelly bean red during winter. These stems are good for flower arrangements. Prune at the end of winter for vibrant new growth.

F Apr-May **H x S** 4m x 4m

3 *Cynara cardunculus*

Cardoons make a striking architectural feature if left to stand over winter, especially layered in frost. From June to September they have thistle-like flowers and large silver-green leaves. Cut back the leaves after flowering and they should re-grow for winter.

F Jun-Sep **H x S** 2.5m x 1.5m

4 *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête'

These are the one of the first daffodils to flower – a group of plants that can keep us in cheery yellow right through until May. This small variety will inject joy into a container. Plant in autumn as one layer in a 'bulb lasagne', with tulips below and crocuses above.

F Feb-Mar **H x S** 15cm x 5cm

5 *Cyclamen coum*

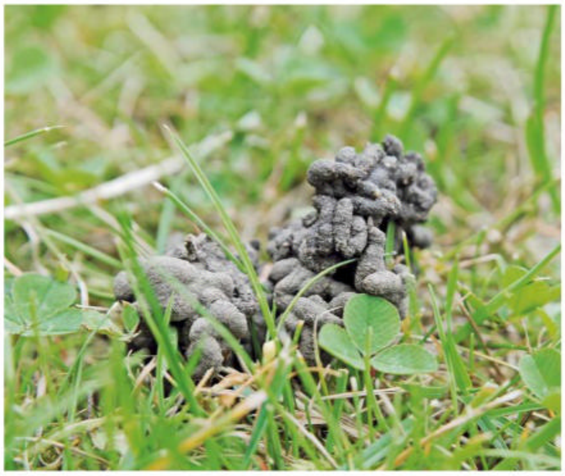
These tiny flowers would look beautiful in a shallow bowl or container with miniature iris or daffodils, and once you have had it in a pot it can be transferred to a shrubbery or under a mature tree where it will spread naturally.

F Jan-Mar **H x S** 15cm x 15cm

What to do now...
around the garden

Tidy up alpines

- Trim off dead leaves and old growth on alpines and hardy succulents in pots.
- Look for any tiny weed seedlings and pull these out by the roots.
- Add more gritty, peat-free, loam-based compost if the compost level is low, but these plants grow naturally on rocky ground with few nutrients, so will be fine if you don't have any to hand.
- Spread a layer of grit on the surface, working it between the plants, right up to the crown of the plants, to allow moisture to escape.



Remove worm casts

Rake worm casts off the surface of the lawn. These spiralled lumps, which are excreted by worms and left at the top of their burrows, can look unsightly and ruin small patches of grass. Most lawns are not badly affected but the casts, like compost from a wormery, make a fantastic bio-rich addition to potting composts, so it's worth collecting. Dry it on some paper and crumble it into a compost mix.

Create a terrarium

Plant up a jar with tropical plants or even cacti to make a terrarium. Tropical plants need a closed lid for humidity, while cacti and succulents are best with a wide opening and no lid. Choose plants based on the size of the jar. Coloured leaves of fittonia or polka dot plants are great, and ferns will love the humidity.

1

Pour a 5cm layer of gravel, pebbles or even decorative glass marbles into the bottom of the jar. Shake the jar to ensure this sits evenly to provide good drainage right across the jar. Use a mixture of loam-based compost with activated charcoal and extra grit for drainage. Add peat-free compost if it's too dense. Trim long roots before lowering them into the jar, using chopsticks or a long spoon.

2

Firm the plants into the compost with a long-handled spoon, then drop small amounts of sphagnum moss into the jar. Push it between the plants to make a moist mulch. Dribble warm rainwater into the jar slowly using a watering can with a small spout. Allow it to soak the compost and mulch without draining too much into the pebble layer. Mist plants occasionally to raise humidity.

Make a new flower bed

Choose a dry day to remove turf so you can prepare the ground for a new border or to widen an existing one for spring planting. Improve the exposed soil by spreading a 5cm layer of organic matter over it before planting. Loosen the soil with a digging fork if drainage needs to be improved.

1

Mark out the area using bamboo canes, landscape marker spray paint or string. Make a vertical cut along the lines.

2

Use a spade or angled turfing iron to cut and lift sections of turf, leaving as much soil in the new border as you can.

3

Stack the turves grass side down. They will rot down to a rich loam in a year.

Cut back epimediums

Trim the old foliage from epimediums before they burst into flower this spring. Some epimediums are deciduous and will have died back already, but although the evergreen varieties will still be in leaf, they will be looking quite tatty by now and if left, the old leaves will hide the flowers too. Cut all the stems right back. Although the plant will look bare, it will soon be replaced by a new canopy of foliage, with the flowers emerging on longer stems above the leaves, before they reach their full height later in the season. Clear away the prunings and add them to your compost heap.

Other tasks to do...

- **Deadhead pansies and primulas to encourage lots more blooms**
- **Cut back deciduous ornamental grasses**
- **Remove and compost soggy stems and yellow leaves from perennials**
- **Cut back hazel to encourage new stems**
- **Ventilate the greenhouse on warmer days**
- **Trim overgrown ivy before birds begin nesting**

What to do now...

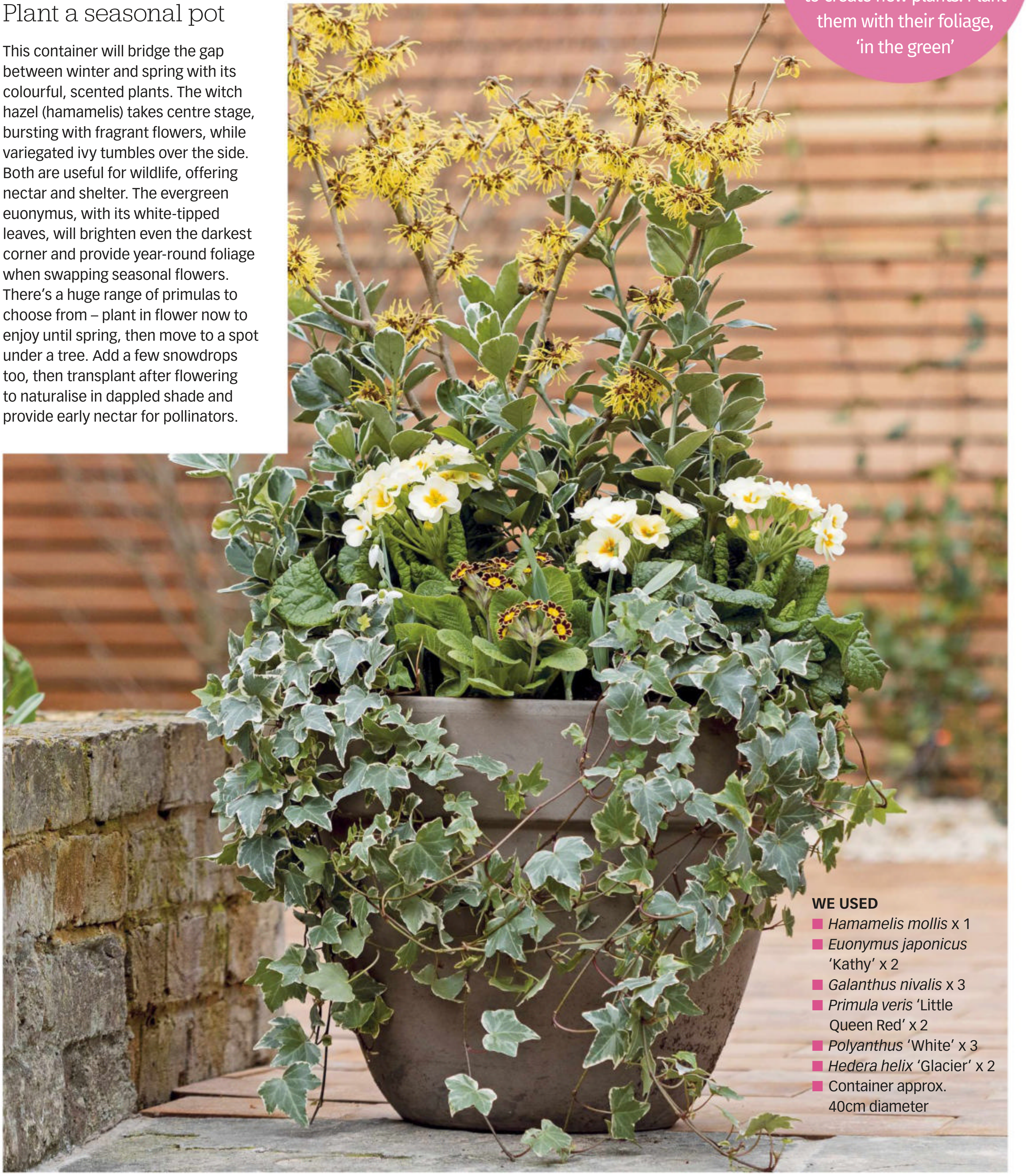
in your flower patch

30 min task

Dig up snowdrop clumps after flowering and divide them to create new plants. Plant them with their foliage, 'in the green'

Plant a seasonal pot

This container will bridge the gap between winter and spring with its colourful, scented plants. The witch hazel (hamamelis) takes centre stage, bursting with fragrant flowers, while variegated ivy tumbles over the side. Both are useful for wildlife, offering nectar and shelter. The evergreen euonymus, with its white-tipped leaves, will brighten even the darkest corner and provide year-round foliage when swapping seasonal flowers. There's a huge range of primulas to choose from – plant in flower now to enjoy until spring, then move to a spot under a tree. Add a few snowdrops too, then transplant after flowering to naturalise in dappled shade and provide early nectar for pollinators.



WE USED

- *Hamamelis mollis* x 1
- *Euonymus japonicus* 'Kathy' x 2
- *Galanthus nivalis* x 3
- *Primula veris* 'Little Queen Red' x 2
- *Polyanthus* 'White' x 3
- *Hedera helix* 'Glacier' x 2
- Container approx. 40cm diameter

Pot up bare-root perennials

Unpack bare-root perennials such as peonies, primulas (above) and hardy geraniums as soon as you get them, to prevent them drying out, or rotting in the packaging. Pot them into soil-based potting compost and grow on somewhere sheltered before planting out. Use scissors to snip off yellowing or mouldy leaves. The longest roots can be cut back by a third, to stimulate thicker root growth.

Trim back heathers

Once winter heathers have flowered, trim them with a sharp pair of shears to keep growth neat and bushy. Examine the plant to judge the point at which the new growth started last year. Cut just above that, so that you are only removing most of last year's growth, along with the flowerheads. The fresh new shoots that emerge will all flower.

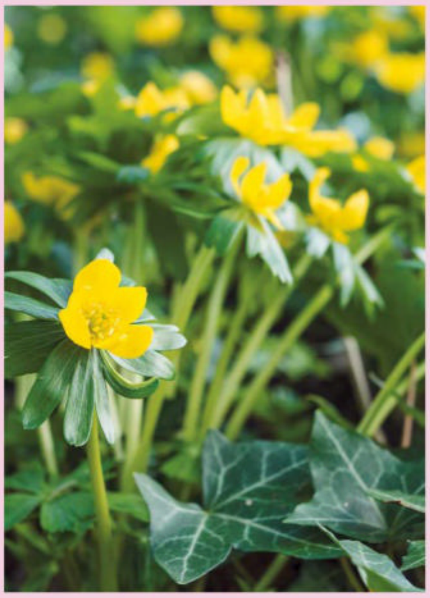
Other tasks to do...

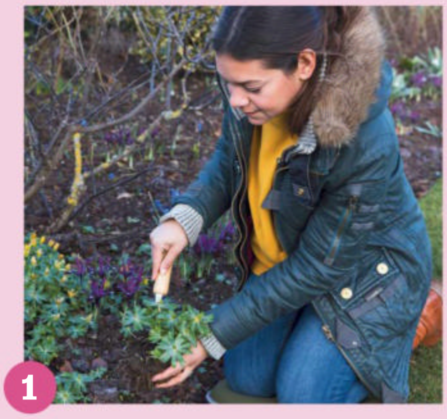
- **Cut cornus and salix back hard to encourage colourful new stems for next winter's display**
- **Prune winter-flowering shrubs that have now finished blooming and have outgrown their space in the garden**
- **Stop bulbs in pots from getting waterlogged by covering them with a sheet of clear plastic, raised above the pot**
- **Use a trowel or weeding tool to uproot perennial weeds**

Lift and divide winter aconites

Winter aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) flower from January to late February, creating a carpet of vibrant yellow. Their flowers are also important for winter insects foraging for food. However, these plants can become overcrowded, and now is the time to divide and rejuvenate dense colonies, just as they finish flowering and while their foliage is still fresh and green.

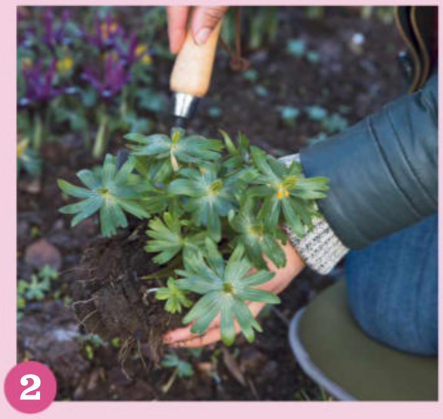
- Clumps that are sparse or only a year or two old should be left to establish further.
- Prepare areas for replanting the divisions by forking in plenty of organic matter, such as leafmould or garden compost.
- If the divisions are dry, soak them in water before replanting.
- Position the tubers about 5cm deep, cover with soil and firm them in, then water well.





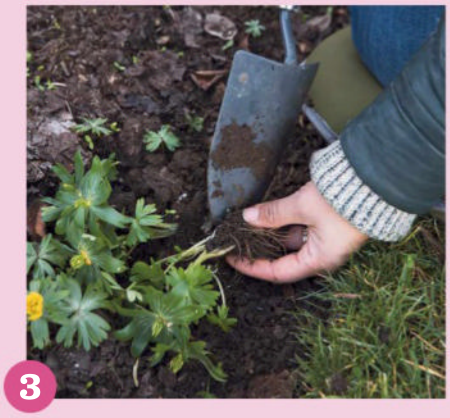
1

Select a particularly congested colony of winter aconites. In a densely planted border like this, it's best to kneel in close and use a trowel or hand fork, so you can minimise disturbance to the other plants nearby.



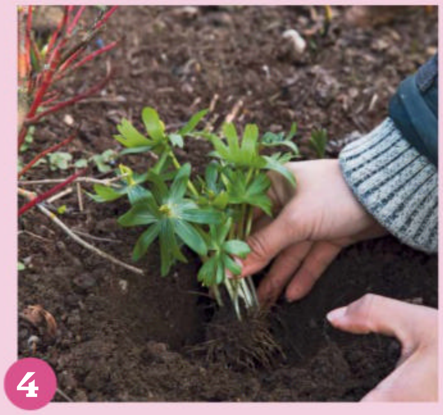
2

Push the trowel in a little way from your chosen clump and go deep, diagonally under it, to loosen the soil. Gently lever out the clump, making sure the tubers are still attached and the roots are intact.



3

Use the trowel or push your fingers into the clump to separate the plants. Pull carefully from low down into the roots to avoid snapping the foliage from the tubers as you tease them apart into several smaller clumps.



4

Replant the divisions into a bed that is prepared with added organic matter, which will help hold moisture while still draining well in wet weather. Firm in the divisions at the depth they were previously growing.

What to do now... growing your own

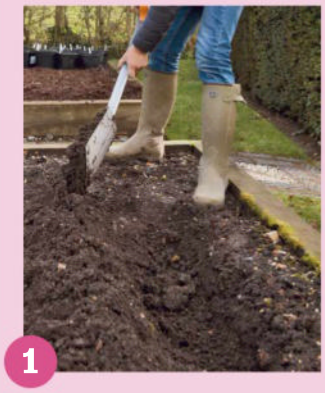
15 min task

Sow tomatoes indoors in pots or trays and cover until they germinate. Transplant seedlings when they are 3-4cm tall

MONEY SAVER

Plant raspberry canes

Buy some raspberry plants now when they're cheapest, right at the end of the bare-root planting season. Plant them into weed-free soil as soon as possible, before spring arrives – but wait for a milder, drier spell if the soil is frozen or waterlogged.



1

Dig out a planting trench at a spade's depth, then fork in a few buckets of rotted manure for extra nutrients and to improve soil drainage.

2

Space plants 40cm apart. Trim straggly roots back if you need to. Back-fill with the dug out soil, holding each cane upright as you tread them in. Soak the row to settle the plants in, and water again when dry. Water less on heavy soils, as raspberries hate wet feet.

Tidy up your strawberry bed

Sort out your strawberry patch in preparation for this year's crop. Cut off the dead leaves on each plant, as the green centre will soon sprout into growth. Then use a trowel to lift out any weeds. Also remove any vigorous runners that will compete for space with the established plants, relocating them to fill any gaps or extend the bed. Sprinkle a granular general feed around the plants to support the new growth.

Organise pots and trays

Prepare yourself for the growing season by tidying up while things are quiet, as sowing starts in earnest next month. Go through stacks of pots, trays and labels and wash what you need, recycling anything that you don't. Find recycling schemes to pass any excess pots and trays on to, or take then to a local garden centre that accepts unwanted pots and compost bags for recycling. Pick up and reuse any plant labels lying around on the veg patch.

Other tasks to do...

- **Plant fruit bushes and trees during dry spells**
- **Replace any damaged tree ties and rabbit guards if necessary**
- **Sow peas and lettuces under cloches in warm, sunny, well-drained areas**
- **Finish planning your crop rotation and order seeds for spring sowing**
- **Harvest Brussels sprouts, leeks and winter cabbages**
- **Plant Jerusalem artichoke tubers in a sunny spot**

Crop of the month

Sprouting broccoli

Sow Feb-July
Harvest Nov-May

Hardy sprouting broccoli has been grown in Britain since the 18th Century, but it was initially known as 'Italian asparagus'. It has extremely high levels of vitamin C, which protects cells and keeps them healthy, and vitamin K, which aids in blood clotting. Sauté it with strong flavours such as chilli, garlic and anchovy.

HARVESTING

When the flowering shoots are 15-20cm long, but before the flower buds open, by snapping off 8-10cm of their length. Regular cropping will encourage your plants to produce more spears. It will stand well in the garden if given protection from birds, especially when other food is scarce. Airflow is needed to keep it fresh, so refrigerate it in a ventilated bag for up to two days. For longer-term storage, blanch for five minutes then store in the freezer for up to 12 months.

OUR CHOICES

'Claret' offers a heavy crop of delicious purple spears; 'Red Spear' crops for a long time and is also very hardy.

Broccoli pesto pizza

Turn your broccoli harvest into an delicious pizza topping. SERVES 4

- 500g pack ciabatta bread mix
- 450 g broccoli
- 100g pine nuts
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 150ml olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 150g ricotta
- 60g bag rocket

1. Make the dough for the pizza following the pack instructions. Knead and pat into a ball. Cut the dough in half and shape it into two large discs on a lightly floured surface – use a rolling pin, if you like. Leave to prove on two greased baking sheets covered with cling film, for 10-15 mins.
2. Meanwhile, make the pesto. Bring a large pan of salted water to the boil. Add the broccoli and cook for one minute. Drain and cool under cold running water. Transfer to the large bowl of a food processor with the pine nuts, garlic and some seasoning. Pulse until breaking down, then gradually pour in the oil while the processor is on – the mixture should be the consistency of pesto. Season to taste, and set aside.
3. Heat oven to 220ºC/200ºC fan/gas 6. Spread the broccoli pesto over both bases, leaving a 2cm edge for the crust, and drizzle with a little olive oil. Bake for 25 mins or until the base is golden and cooked through.
4. Dot over the ricotta and scatter a handful of the rocket over each. Finish with a drizzle of olive oil and a good grinding of black pepper.

WHY NOT TRY...
Sprouting broccoli in a cheesy gratin or as a side to a couple of poached eggs

March

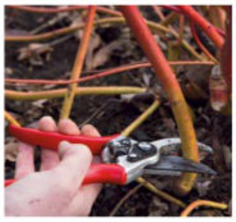
The temperature is unlikely to be high in March, but even on freezing days, there's still the hope of spring this month. It's time to kickstart things in the garden, whether that's tidying up perennials, finishing off the rose pruning or edging the lawn

Key task

Add impact to your garden with a small flowering cherry, such as *Prunus* 'Pink Shell', which has pale-pink spring flowers

This month’s round-up…

It’s a good month to start sowing, but test your soil to check it’s warm enough first. While you’re out getting on with the month’s garden tasks, look out for robins pairing up ready for nesting, and hairy-footed flower bees visiting primulas.



Prune

- Damaged branches on trees & shrubs
- Dogwoods (cornus)
- Elderberry
- Hardy fuchsias
- Lavender
- Mahonia
- Roses (last chance)

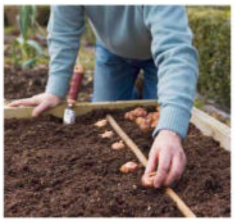
Sow

Indoors

- Basil
- Beetroot
- Celeriac
- Cucumbers
- Lettuces
- Parsley

Outdoors

- Broad beans
- Carrots
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Peas
- Turnips
- Hardy annuals
- Sweet peas



Plant

- Asparagus
- Jerusalem artichokes
- New roses
- Strawberries
- Summer bulbs
- Trees, shrubs and climbers

Harvest

- Cabbages
- Cauliflowers
- Forced rhubarb
- Sprouting broccoli
- Swiss chard

S **1**
S **2**
M **3**
T **4**
W **5**
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S **29**
S **30**
M **31**

This month's

Star plants

1 *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*

This evergreen perennial has striking lime green flowers in early spring. It's height and architectural shape add interest to the border year round, and once established it's drought tolerant. It also makes an attractive backdrop for spring bulbs such as tulips.

Flowers Mar-Jul
Height x Spread 1.2m x 1.2m

2 *Scilla siberica*

Siberian squill are perfect for naturalising beneath deciduous trees and shrubs, where their blue flowers will light up the ground in early spring. These flowers are tough and low-maintenance.

F Mar-Apr **H x S** 20cm x 5cm

3 Perennial wallflowers

Perennial wallflowers such as *Erysimum cheiri* 'Sunset Primrose' and erysimum 'Bowles's Mauve' are both drought-tolerant, prolific flowering plants, which provide rich colour from spring through to early summer. Both will suit either containers or border displays.

F Mar-Jul **H x S** 75cm x 60cm

4 Primula Gold-laced Group

This modern variety of polyanthus has gold-edged petals and makes an attractive bedding plant for spring containers. Plant it in moist soil in partial shade, alongside other spring-flowering plants such as daffodils or hellebores.

F Mar-Apr **H x S** 20cm x 30cm

5 Bedding daisies

These short-lived perennials are more colourful than your little lawn daisies. The flowers bring a shot of vivid colour crammed into the edge of an early spring pot. Combine them with bulbs or violas and keep them well watered.

F Mar-May **H x S** 15cm x 15cm

2

3

4

5

What to do now...

around the garden

Protect shoots from frost

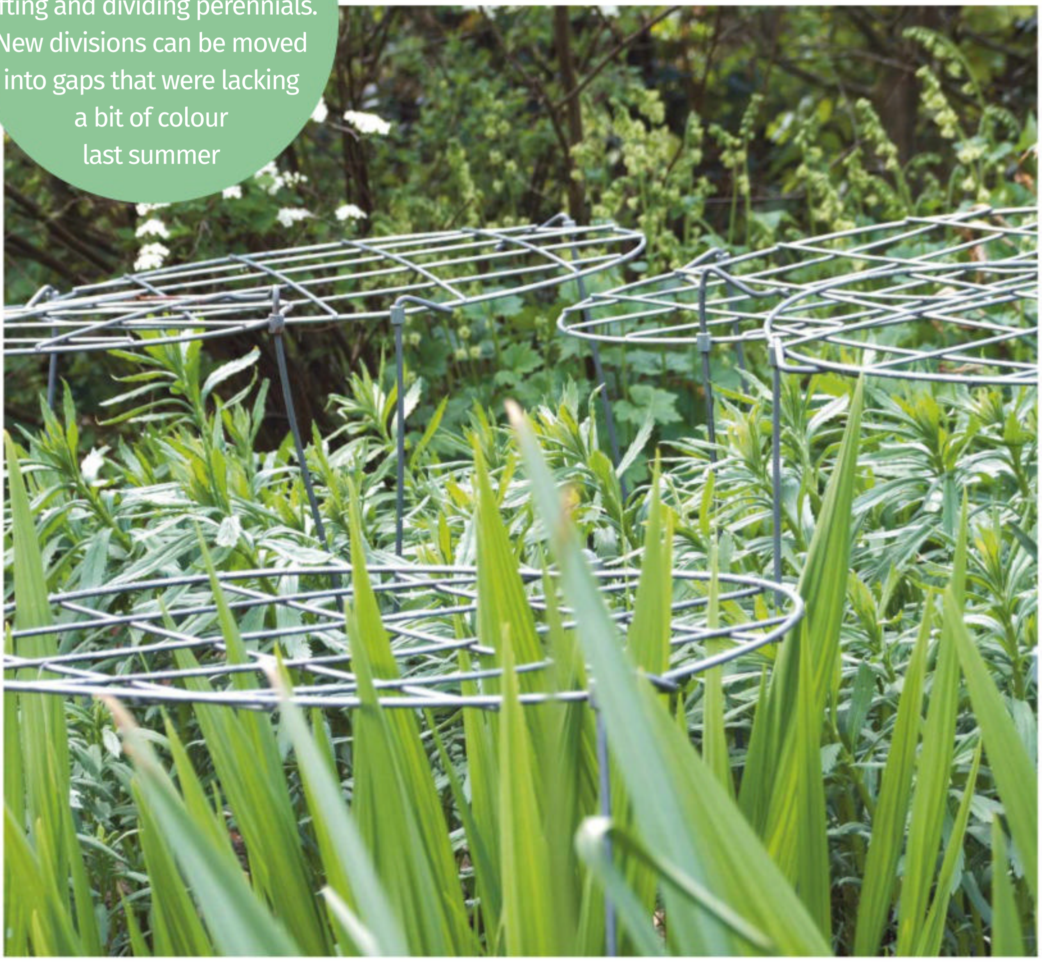
Put temporary fleece covers over borderline-hardy plants if there's frost or chilly weather forecast, to protect any new shoots that have already grown. It may only need to be on overnight, so make it as easy as possible to put on and take off. Use a light horticultural fleece that won't snap vulnerable shoots. Use clothes pegs to attach it loosely on the branches or over a structure. Remove the fleece during the day unless the low temperature persists all day, or if there is a chilly wind.

Try sowing in coir pellets

Compressed coir pellets are very easy to use, and lighter and more compact than bags of compost. To prepare them, soak the pellets so they expand in their biodegradable net holders and the compost softens. Then set them out in a tray, with each one touching. Sow your seeds into the centre of each one – here we're sowing sunflowers, dibbing each seed in with a pencil. Then place the tray in a warm, bright spot.

Top tip

Reorganise your borders by lifting and dividing perennials. New divisions can be moved into gaps that were lacking a bit of colour last summer



Plan plant supports

Put plant supports around herbaceous clumps before they get too big and need unsightly staking with canes and string. Target heavy flowers such as peonies and plants with tall stems such as delphiniums. The foliage will grow through the supports, hiding them by the time the flowers are out, so it will look perfectly natural.

- Bundle some flexible whippy prunings together and tie them to create an arched support around the clump. Push them into the ground.
- Collect hazel prunings and push them separately into the ground through clumps of perennials to give support. The strong horizontal laterals on hazel will help to support taller stems, too.
- Construct a bamboo tripod for climbing plants such as sweet peas. Use five or even seven canes if the site is exposed to strong winds. Push the canes in, then tie the tops together to make an apex. Tie horizontal strings at 20cm intervals up to the top.
- Put flat, horizontal supports in to keep heavy or tall flower heads from flopping. Some designs allow the flat support to be raised up vertical stakes as the stems get higher.

MONEY SAVER

Pot up young shrubs

Pot on cuttings that have rooted from shrubs that flowered last year. Water them first, then press them out of their modules and gently tease out the bottom roots. Put some peat-free compost into the bottom of the pot and hold the cutting in the centre. Use the other hand to fill with more compost and press it in, making sure the cutting is central and just the roots, not the stem, are under the compost. Water them in, trim the tops to encourage more bushy growth and space them out to grow.

10 min task

Move pots of spring bulbs and any spring-flowering shrubs in containers into prominent positions as they start to flower

Edge lawns growing over paths

Cut back grass growing over the edges of paths and hard standing. The grass can't root in but the rhizomes that extend it from the parent plant will continue to feed it. Cut the grass back with the blade of a trowel or use an old knife, and compost the grassy bits. This neatens the lines and gives your lawn a stronger shape. If the soil butts right up to the hard standing, you may have to do this a few times a year.

Other tasks to do...

- Lay new lawns from turf when the weather is mild and dry
- Check new shoots on roses for aphids
- Dig out perennial weeds, removing as much root as possible
- Order new biological controls, such as nematodes, to help keep slugs and snails at bay
- Remove netting from ponds

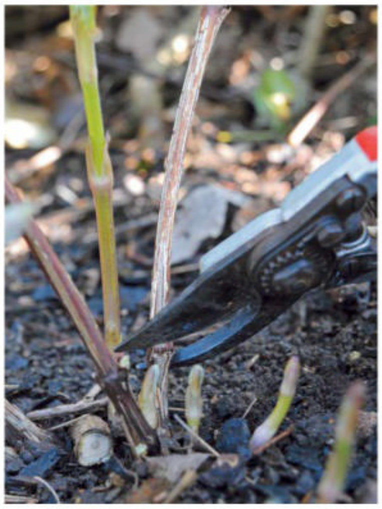
What to do now...
in your flower patch

Last chance to prune bush roses

- Shrub roses should be lightly pruned. Using a clean pair of secateurs, thin out some of the stems and reduce the height of all others by a third. Cut above a bud that faces in the direction you want the new growth to take. Shrub roses vary in habit, so be careful not to ruin the shape. If there are arching stems, tip these back lightly and cut back the lateral shoots further instead.
- Prune hybrid tea roses back to outward-facing buds to keep the centre of the plant open, leaving just a third of their height.

Top tip

Allow hellebores to self-seed. Seeds germinate in a cool, lightly shaded spot. Hellebores are known to hybridise. Letting them seed can result in exciting new plants.



Cut back late-flowering clematis

For a good display of blooms lower down, prune late-flowering clematis (known as Group 3) before they start to sprout from buds at the top of last year's tangle of growth. Their flower buds form on new stems, so if you prune now, every shoot that grows away this year can bear flowers. Examples include *Clematis viticella*, *C. texensis*, *C.* x *triternata* and varieties such as 'Abundance' and 'Princess Diana'. Pruning them is easy. Cut all the stems back to the lowest healthy bud above ground level – check which group your clematis is in first though as other groups are pruned differently.

Tidy up perennials

Give low-growing perennials such as alchemilla a quick tidy-up before growth really gets under way. The old stalks where last year's leaves were attached will pull away by hand. Use secateurs if any are too tough. You'll reveal the emerging shoots and leaves and give them space to develop. Early-flowering perennials such as centaureas and astrantias will also benefit from this tidy-up. While you're at it, remove any snails, and pull out any weed seedlings to let the birds get in and do the rest of the clearing up.

Other tasks to do...

- **Plant flowering shrubs when the soil is dry enough underfoot**
- **Tidy up displays of alpine plants**
- **Plant out gladiolus corms and lily bulbs**
- **Lift and divide snowdrops while they're in leaf**
- **Give roses an early spring grnaular rose food**
- **Sow half-hardy annuals indoors**
- **Plant summer bulbs**

Top tip

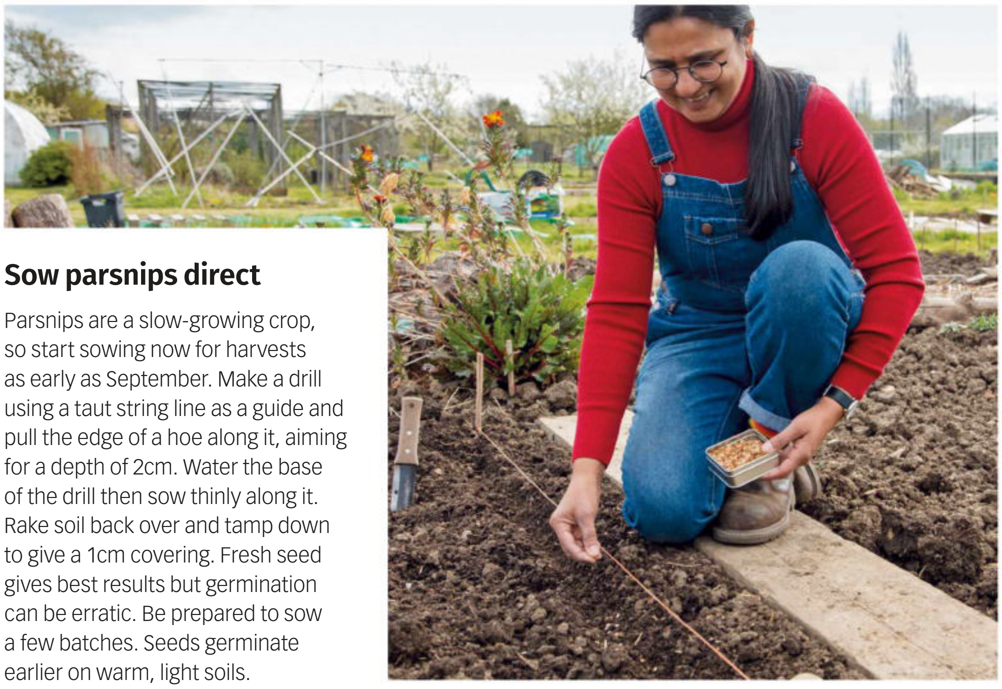
Combine shade-lovers such as *Lamprocapnos spectabalis* with pretty foliage plants such as variegated hostas to lighten a gloomy corner

Add colour to shady spots

Choose early-flowering perennials to plant now for instant colour, particularly in shady areas. Blue and white-flowered brunneras, pink lamprocapnos (bleeding heart) and pale-pink or white perennial lunarias will brighten up dull corners and create a spring carpet under trees, returning year after year. The hardy geraniums *G. nodosum* and *G. macrorrhizum* are also great in dry shade. Give plants a good soak in their pots before planting, then use a trowel or border spade to make holes deep enough for the rootball. Firm them in, water again, then mulch with well-rotted garden compost.

What to do now...

growing your own



Sow parsnips direct

Parsnips are a slow-growing crop, so start sowing now for harvests as early as September. Make a drill using a taut string line as a guide and pull the edge of a hoe along it, aiming for a depth of 2cm. Water the base of the drill then sow thinly along it. Rake soil back over and tamp down to give a 1cm covering. Fresh seed gives best results but germination can be erratic. Be prepared to sow a few batches. Seeds germinate earlier on warm, light soils.

Top tip

If soil is very wet, sow broad beans into deep modules. Fill them with peat-free multi-purpose compost, water, then sow one seed per module

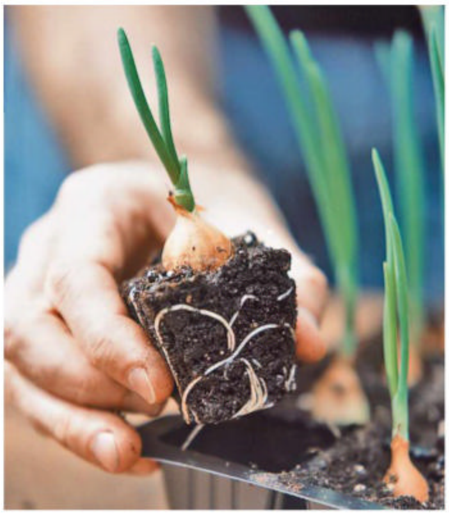
Feed blueberries

Give blueberries a boost and encourage better cropping by scattering slow-release fertiliser granules around the plant's root area. Blueberries do best in acidic soils so choose a fertiliser that has been specially formulated for use with ericaceous shrubs. Check the instructions on the packet to get the dosage right. Gently rake fertiliser granules into the soil surface. Well-rotted manure is also acidic and makes a good alternative.

RED DUKE OF YORK

Plant out onions, garlic and shallots

Onions, garlic and shallots that have been started off in modules should be about ready for planting out now. Modules are a really useful way of starting these crops if you have heavy, claggy soil that would otherwise hold so much water that your sets or cloves could rot before they can start rooting out. It's also useful if your soil is frozen when you are hoping to plant sets.



Plant first early potatoes

Plant towards the end of this month if not too wet. Seed potatoes should have short chits sprouting at the top but those without chits can still be planted.

- Plant them with the chits facing upwards in a weed-free bed, in rows 60cm apart.
- Plant tubers 12cm deep and at 40cm intervals. Be ready to rake soil over the shoots as they appear.
- Earlies can be grown in large pots, one tuber per 30cm diameter of pot, submerged in a 15cm layer of compost, topped up as the plant grows.

Other tasks to do...

- **Sow cold-tolerant herbs such as parsley, dill and chervil**
- **Mulch around the base of fruit bushes**
- **Tie stray fruit canes to their wire supports**
- **Sow peas direct in very mild, sunny, sheltered corners**
- **Protect salads with cloches to speed up growth and provide protection from frost**

Crop of the month

Mint

Plant Mar-Jun
Harvest Mar-Oct

Mint can help deter mice, and planted near roses, it may deter aphids. As well as the classic mint sauce, mint leaves make a great tea and can also be added to meat, fish, yoghurt, fruit and chocolate. Peppermint is antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-parasitic. It can be used to treat gastro-intestinal disorders and nervous headaches. The oil can be used in massage to relieve muscle pain. Although it will grow in shade, mint produces more leaves and oil in full sun, provided the soil holds moisture well. Take care as it can be invasive.

HARVESTING:
Pick the leaves for fresh use throughout the growing season. Leaves can be dried or frozen for storage. New leaves should appear from late March depending on how warm the spring weather is.

OUR CHOICES:
Mentha spicata, or spearmint, is the most common garden mint. *M. spicata* 'Tashkent' and 'Moroccan' are considered the best for cooking. *Mentha* x *piperita*, or peppermint, is good for medicinal purposes. Also look out for 'Lemon' and 'Chocolate' varieties to use for flavouring desserts.

Lemon & herb frittata with Jersey Royals & crème fraiche

This frittata is a lovely, easy way to make the most of herbs – perfect for lunchboxes or a light supper with a glass of wine and some good bread. Leftovers are excellent sliced in a baguette the next day, too, Spanish tortilla style. You can use mint, flat-leaf parsley and lemon verbena to enhance the lemon flavour, but basil, chives or any other soft herb also works well. SERVES 4

- 500g Jersey Royals, thinly sliced
- 6 free-range eggs
- 200g crème fraiche
- 1 lemon, zest only
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
- 30g butter
- 100g mixed garden herbs, roughly chopped

1. Bring a pan of salted water to the boil and cook the sliced potatoes for 7 minutes before draining well. Meanwhile, whisk the eggs, crème fraîche, lemon zest, a good grind of black pepper and sea salt together, and set aside.
2. Pre-heat the oven to 180°C (or 160°C fan). In a small (ideally ovenproof) frying pan, heat the butter until foaming, then add the herbs. Fry for 2-3 minutes until fragrant, then add the potatoes and turn gently in the hot butter.
3. If using an ovenproof pan, pour the egg mixture in over the potatoes. If not, tip the potatoes into a small, lined, round oven dish, flatten with a spoon, then pour the egg mixture over evenly.
4. Transfer to the oven to bake for 25-30 minutes, until the egg is just set. Let the frittata cool for 10 minutes before slicing and serving warm or at room temperature, seasoned with a little more sea salt.

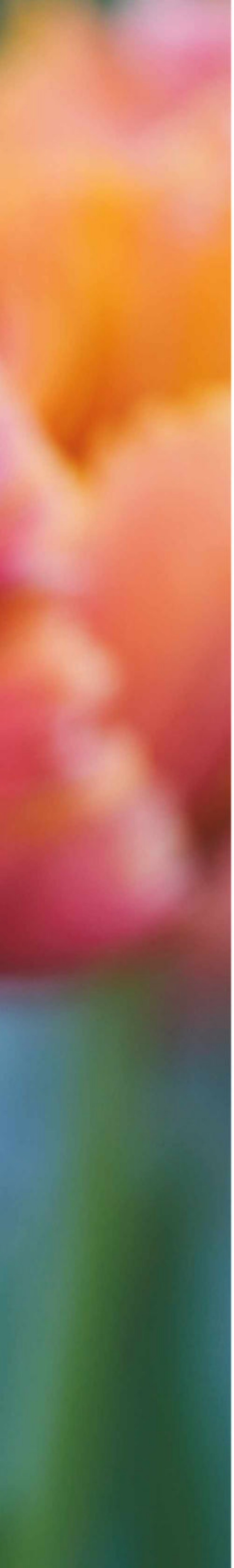
WHY NOT TRY...
Use the first harvest of herbs to add flavour to omelettes or use your first mint harvest to make mint tea

Key task

Water tulips in pots, if the weather is dry, to help prolong the flowering period. Feed weekly with a potassium-rich fertiliser

April

This is a month to embrace tulips and all the colour that is bursting from borders and containers, as the weather steadily warms up. With this warmth come a host of gardening tasks, from weeding borders and cleaning out ponds, to dividing perennials and harvesting early crops. It's also prime time for delicious harvests of asparagus and rhubarb, too



This month's round up...

For those with ponds, look out for newts and tadpoles while clearing out leaves and debris this month. Also be on the look out for chiff chaffs and orange tip butterflies as you get on with weeding and sowing vegetables.

Prune

- Fig trees
- Hardy evergreens
- *Hydrangea paniculata*
- Ornamental quince (chaenomeles) – after flowering
- Penstemons
- Untidy ferns

Sow

Indoors

- Courgettes
- Cucumbers
- French beans
- Pumpkins
- Runner beans
- Sweetcorn

Outdoors

- Brussels sprouts
- Leeks
- Lettuces
- Spinach

Plant

- Potted perennials
- Potatoes – early and maincrop varieties
- Summer-flowering bulbs
- Sweet pea seedlings

Harvest

- Asparagus
- Beetroot
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Salad leaves
- Spring onions

T **1**
W **2**
T **3**
F **4**
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T **8**
W **9**
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F **11**
S **12**
S **13**
M **14**
T **15**
W **16**
T **17**
F **18** GOOD FRIDAY BANK HOLIDAY UK
S **19**
S **20**
M **21** EASTER MONDAY BANK HOLIDAY UK
T **22**
W **23**
T **24**
F **25**
S **26**
S **27**
M **28**
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W **30**

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This month's Star plants

1 Clematis 'Apple Blossom'

A trailer for the real apple blossom that comes next month. This is one of those climbers that will stop you in your tracks, as not only is it freckled with perfect pink blossoms, it also has attractive, evergreen leaves. The flowers also look fabulous in a vase. Grow it out of cold winds.

Flowers Mar-Apr
Height x Spread 5m x 4m

2 Chocolate vine

Akebia quinata is a semi-evergreen climber with attractive red to purple, sometimes described as chocolate-coloured, flowers. These have a spicy, vanilla scent. Its leaves provide good coverage for a wall for fence, taking on a purple tint in autumn and winter, although in cold weather the plant may lose its foliage. Its ideal for a warm spot, such as south or west facing fence

F Mar-May **H x S** 10m x 2m

3 Snake's head fritillary

Fritillaria meleagris thrives in moist, well drained soil and is ideal for naturalising in grass or damp woodland areas. The colourful chequered flowers are held on slender stems throughout spring.

F Apr-May **H x S** 30cm x 8cm

4 *Pieris japonica* 'Purity'

This evergreen shrub is a great pick for providing leafy structure in winter borders. The leaves are a delicate, pale lettuce-green when they first emerge, but turn darker and glossier as the summer progresses. In April 'Purity' has pretty, pearly white flowers. It grows best in a slightly acidic soil.

F Apr-May **H x S** 1.5m x 1.5cm

5 Muscari

These tiny flowers, also known as grape hyacinths, come in blue, purple, white and pink. Some are even scented. Muscari thrive in dappled shade and open, sunny situations in borders, rough grass, raised beds and pots. Can be invasive.

F Apr-May **H x S** 15cm x 5cm

What to do now...

around the garden

Recycle lawn clippings

Use lawn clippings to quickly heat up the compost heap. Mix them in with other materials – such as prunings and cardboard – to stop them becoming a soggy layer that blocks airflow and smells bad. The effect that this mix of soft, green material will have is really fast. The heap heats up as the bacteria get to work and speeds up decomposition. You can add more as it cools, but it's best not to overload the heap with grass. Green waste should make up between a quarter to a half of the heap's contents. Thin layers of clippings can also be used as a mulch around veg plants.

Ventilate the greenhouse

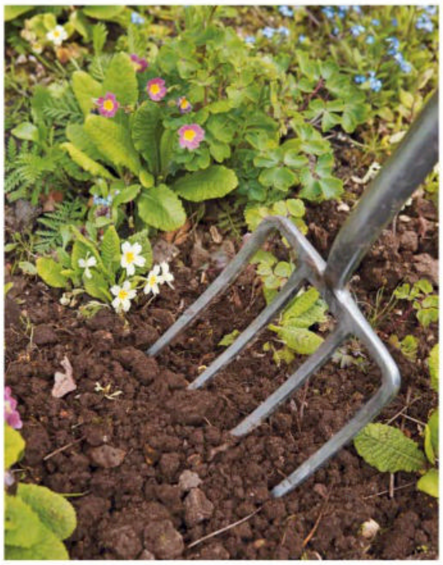
Open the vents in the greenhouse now that daytime temperatures are rising. The temperature under glass will rise quickly when the sun shines, so make sure young plants don't suffer from exposure to temperature extremes by opening vents in the morning and closing them at night. Automatic vents are normally set at around 18ºC and can be adjusted if necessary. Good air circulation is important because it keeps plants in growth and keeps fungal disease at bay.

Remove old growth from pond plants

Take all rotting plant material – including dead leaves, branches and any other detritus – out of the pond before the water warms any more and uses up all the available oxygen in the pond. Then go through all the plants, trimming out old foliage at the base. If you have waterlilies, get your arms right down into the plant and trim back last year's flower stems and any leftover foliage. Also prune back branches that are dangling in or near the pond. Large bodies of water can usually cope with the above waste, but a small pond is vulnerable and needs to be maintained regularly.

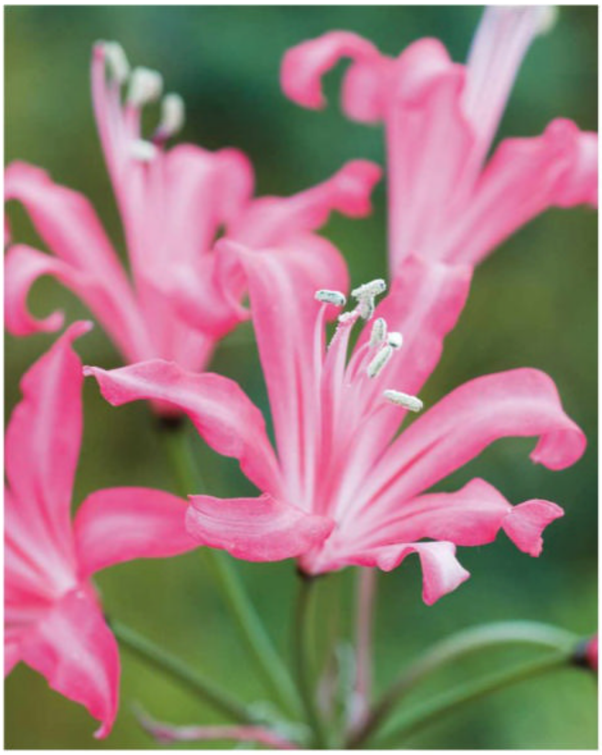
Top tip

April is a good time to plant an evergreen hedge. The roots will grow quickly and the plants have the rest of the growing season to establish



Fork and weed over borders

Relieve surface compaction in your borders by forking through the gaps. Work backwards so that you don't tread where you've been and just use the points of the tines to lift the top 3-4cm of soil. This will aerate the surface, which, in turn, helps to warm up the soil. Take out any weeds as you go, and thin out self-seeders, particularly along the edges. Be careful not to damage any bulbs that are coming through. It's also a good time to follow this up with a layer of compost mulch.



Plant nerines in pots

Start off nerines now for glorious flowers this autumn. Nerines love good drainage, so plant them into large pots of peat-free multipurpose compost with a couple of handfuls of grit mixed into each one, making sure each pot has at least one clear drainage hole.

- Plant the bulbs just below the compost surface, so the neck of the bulb sticks out above the soil.
- Space them 7-10cm apart before watering them in.
- Position the pot in a warm, sunny spot outside, ideally by the shelter of a south-facing wall.

Other tasks to do...

- Give lawns a spring feed to encourage strong, thick growth
- Spread mulch around gaps in between plants in the border
- Prune any shrub branches damaged by winter storms
- Tie honeysuckle and clematis to their supports
- Remove protective netting from ponds

What to do now...

in your flower patch

Divide agapanthus

Established clumps of agapanthus can be divided now that they are actively shooting. Do this every three years to keep them vigorous. Either lift the whole clump out and pull it apart into smaller clumps of bulbs, or cut through it in the border with a spade. This may damage a bulb or two, but makes the job easy and they so will soon recover. Pot into loam-based compost or plant back into the border, adding extra compost to the hole and giving them more room. Keep well watered until flowering.

Top tip

Always water sweet peas slowly so as much water as possible reaches the roots – shallow watering will give little benefit to the plant

Look after sweet peas

- Check on newly planted sweet pea plants and add them to your watering routine. Water when water compost is dry. Avoid watering already damp compost, particularly when plants are young.
- Gradually build up the quantity of water that you give them as the plants put on growth. Sweet peas are hungry feeders, so when they begin to scramble up through their supports start adding a general liquid feed once a week.
- Tie sweet pea seedlings into their canes or netting mesh, so early tendrils extend and find the right supports. This makes sure rapid growth this spring heads up in the right direction. Pull them towards the canes gently to avoid snapping the plants at the base. If just the tips get damaged they'll soon recover, with new shoots from the buds below.

Harden off dahlias

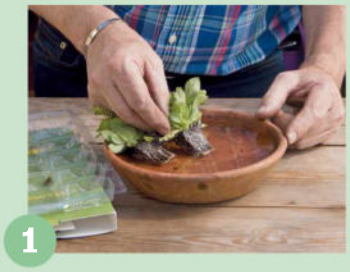
Move dahlias outside during the day towards the end of this month to expose them to lower temperatures, ready for planting. It takes two or three weeks to get them ready. Start by bringing them in at night, then if temperatures don't plummet, after a week, leave them out somewhere sheltered. Extra air movement dries dahlias out, so water in the morning to keep them growing. Plant next month when frost risk has passed.

Other tasks to do...

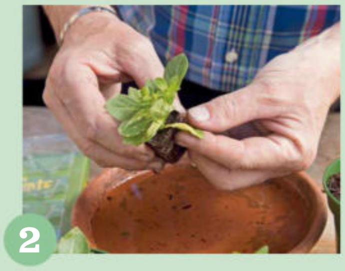
- **Check rose shoots for aphids, gently rubbing off by hand as you see them**
- **Plant out all summer bulbs before the end of the month**
- **Deadhead primroses, picking off any diseased and yellow leaves**
- **Plant pot-grown tulips into garden borders and larger containers for instant colour**
- **Cut old penstemon stems to the lowest set of leaves**

Care for plug plants

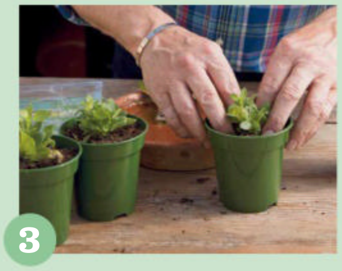
Unpack plug plants straight away to give them some air and stop the leaves rotting. These young plants are ready to grow away quickly so potting them into individual pots will allow them to grow to their full potential. Make sure you protect them from frosts and give them plenty of light. A wel-lit place on a greenhous bench is ideal. Space them further out on the bench as they grow to allo wgood air circulation.



1 Stand the plugs in a saucer of tepid water so that the roots get a chance to draw up plenty of moisture, which will help them root out well once potted.



2 Take off any yellowing lower leaves. Grip them between thumb and finger, close to the stem, and pull them away gently. If they resist, use snips to avoid tearing.



3 Fill some 8-9cm pots with peat-free multi-purpose compost, make a hole in the centre with your fingers, and drop the plug in. Firm the compost around the plug.

4 Fill a watering can with water that is a similar temperature to the compost and carefully soak each plant thoroughly so that all the compost is evenly moist.

What to do now...

growing your own

Mulch before sowing

Rake a layer of organic compost over the surface of seed beds in the veg patch to prepare the surface for sowing. The compost's dark colour will help to capture and retain heat from sunlight, while the organic matter within it will absorb moisture, add nutrients and aerate the top layer of soil. In combination, all of these things will improve germination and give seedlings an excellent start. Do this in areas where you plan to plant young plants.

MONEY SAVER

Start beans under cover

Sow some climbing beans ready for planting out at the end of May. They can be sown individually to save potting on any further before planting out.

- Use pots filled with peat-free compost. Push the seed in 3cm deep. If you're not sure which way up they should go, don't worry – the roots will always extend down and the shoots will always grow up.
- Water the pots with a fine rose on the can, but then don't water again until the seedlings are growing away strongly.
- Finish by placing the pots in a very sheltered spot out of the rain, ideally in a greenhouse or cold frame. Germination is most reliable above 15°C.

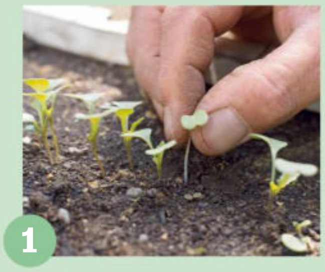
Plant maincrop potatoes

Most soils are warm enough for maincrop potatoes from the middle of the month, so make sure you're ready to plant them out. They do best in soil enriched with rotted manure together with a general fertiliser such as blood, fish and bone, added when planting.

- Dig out a trench 12cm deep. Make rows 75cm apart to allow for earthing up as they grow.
- Stand the tubers along the row at 40cm intervals with any sprouts pointing up, then cover them with the dug soil.
- When shoots emerge above ground, rake soil over them to cover them. This protects them from frost and promotes tuber formation.

Thin out seedlings

Seedlings of leafy crops need space, so thin them out now. Before you start, check the optimum spacing for the crop you're working with. A simple wooden batten with notches every centimetre helps. You could choose to thin by half, harvesting every other seedling to use in a salad, and then finish the thinning in a few weeks' time, or you could do it all in one go. It can be wise to do it in stages as this also gives you spares in case of mollusc damage.



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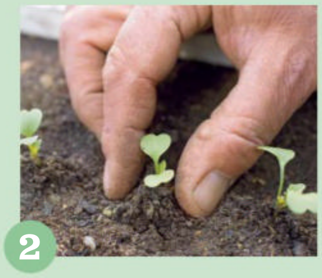
Focus on the seedling you're keeping, and pull nearby ones away. Move to the next one in the row that is at the right spacing.



2

Firm the soil around the remaining seedlings then settle their roots by watering gently, using a fine rose on the can.

Other tasks to do...

- Finish planting all new soft fruit bushes
- Sow Brussels sprouts, cabbages, carrots, chard, leeks, lettuces, peas, radishes and spinach
- Plant out onion sets, shallots and leeks
- Hand-pollinate wall-trained fruit if insects aren't flying
- Hoe or pull out weeds while they're small

Crop of the month

Radish

Sow Mar-Jul
Harvest Apr-Sep

These dainty roots are super quick to grow and add bite to a salad. Radishes were grown by the ancient Egyptians and Greeks, and are likely to have been introduced to Britain by the Romans.They should be eaten raw and very fresh. The young leaves can be eaten, but should be cooked like spinach because the hairs can irritate the mouth.

Radishes are rich in vitamin C and glucosinolates, which protect against cancer. They also increase bile, making it easier to digest fatty foods. Radishes should be avoided by people with an underactive thyroid or inflammatory digestive disorders.

Sow from early spring, sowing short rows every 10-14 days for a continuous supply. Make a drill 1cm deep and sow thinly. Sift a light covering of soil over them and water well. Avoid letting seedlings dry out, to prevent attacks from flea beetles.

HARVEST

When shoots are big enough to handle, thin to 2.5cm apart. Harvest from four weeks. Keep in a plastic bag in the fridge for up to a week.

OUR CHOICES

'Amethyst', 'Cherry Belle', 'French Breakfast 3'

Baked feta with hazelnut and radishes

Baked feta is the perfect foil for peppery homegrown radishes and leaves, with the winning combination of sharp, salty cheese and fresh salad. It's delicious as a starter or as part of a mezze. SERVES 4

- 200g feta cheese
- 50g hazelnuts, halved
- Extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 handful fresh radishes
- 1 lemon, juice and zest
- 2 tsp honey
- Small bunch chives, finely chopped
- Sea salt
- Big handful fresh salad leaves

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C. Place the feta on a lined baking tray, scatter over the hazelnuts, drizzle with 1 tbsp olive oil and season with the freshly ground black pepper. Transfer to the oven to bake for 20 minutes.
2. Thinly slice or halve the radishes, and place them in cold water. Whisk the lemon juice and zest, 45ml olive oil, honey, chives and sea salt together. Taste and adjust the salt and honey to your taste.
3. Once the feta is cooked, dress the salad leaves with half the dressing and combine in a serving dish. Lay the feta on top, scatter with the radishes and any hazelnuts that have fallen off during baking, and pour over the remaining dressing. Serve immediately.

WHY NOT TRY...
Add some pickled radish to sandwiches or salads, or put them in a salad of new potatoes

May

The soil is warming up in May, which means it's a month full of action and colour. The borders are filling up with flowers, and weeds, so it's a wonderful time to be gardening – keeping on top of unwanted plants such as bindweed, but also sowing vegetables direct, keeping lawns healthy and planting bulbs for a late summer boost

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Key task

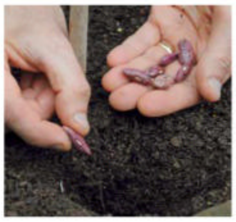
Grow butterfly-friendly plants such as bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) in warm, sheltered, sunny parts of the garden

This month's round up...

You may see sparrows, starlings and blue tits in your garden, looking for grubs for their young. A key task this month is keeping bird baths topped up. It's also time to sow annual vegetables and flowers and plant up pots.

Prune

- Clematis (early, spring-flowering types)
- Evergreen shrubs
- Pyracanthas
- Spring-flowering shrubs



Sow

Indoors

- Courgettes
- Cucumbers
- Pumpkins

Outdoors

- Annuals
- Chard and spinach
- French and runner beans
- Peas
- Salad leaves
- Sprouting broccoli
- Sweetcorn

Plant

- Dahlia tubers in pots
- Hardened-off seedlings of leeks and cabbages
- Summer bedding into borders and containers – after the last frost
- Summer hanging baskets to grow on under cover

Harvest

- Asparagus
- Baby beetroot
- Broad beans
- Lettuces
- Pea shoots
- Rhubarb
- Salad leaves
- Spring onions
- Strawberries (grown in the greenhouse)

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M **5** BANK HOLIDAY UK
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M **26** BANK HOLIDAY UK
T **27**
W **28**
T **29**
F **30**
S **31**

This month's
Star plants

1 *Camassia leichtlinii*

The bulbs of blue camassia hail from the prairies of North America. This tall early summer-flowering perennial does well in slightly damp (not waterlogged) soil, as long as it is not too shady. Plant bulbs in the autumn.

Flowers May-Jun
Height x Spread 1.2m x 50cm

2 Geranium 'Rozanne'

Flowering through summer into autumn, this hardy geranium is a border stalwart. It provides easy ground cover inbetween shrubs and perennials with its violet-blue flowers brightening summer displays for months on end.

F Jun-Oct **H x S** 60cm x 80cm

3 *Deutzia* x *elegantissima* 'Rosealind'

This is one of those shrubs that, due to the vagaries of fashion, has fallen from grace over the past couple of decades, but perhaps it deserves more attention. It flowers well from spring into summer, copes with all soil types, behaves immaculately, shrugs off pests and is easy to grow. Its only requirement is decent light. Keep in shape by pruning after flowering.

F Apr-Jun **H x S** 1.5m x 1.5m

4 *Embothrium coccineum*

Everybody falls in love with this beautiful half-hardy shrub because of its flaming orange flowers, but you do need the right soil. It won't thrive in alkaline or chalky conditions. Instead, it needs well-drained, acidic soil.

F May-Jun **H x S** 6m x 4m

5 Pelargoniums

The pelargonium is a wonderful plant that is perfect for window boxes, hanging baskets and pots – it is one of the greatest plants ever for summer colour. Angel pelargoniums, which include the Quantock series, have pansy-like flowers.

F Apr-Sep **H x S** 45cm x 40cm

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What to do now...

around the garden

Tie in clematis shoots

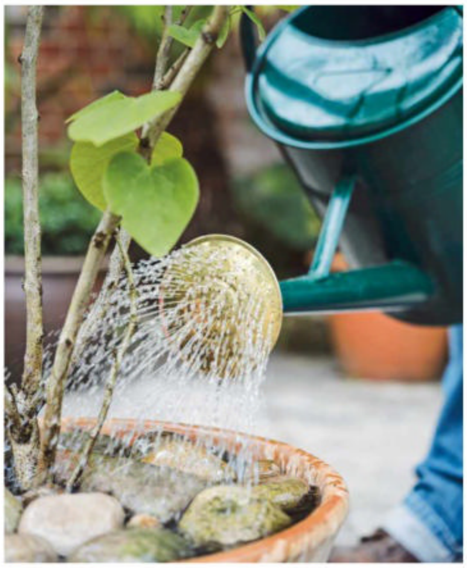
Secure the new shoots of clematis to their frames or supports to stop them extending out and flowing into other plants, or potentially snapping. The vigorous growth of early summer can be unruly so this will ensure that the plant maintains a neat shape at flowering time. Clematis stems are quite brittle, so gently pull each shoot back to a point on the frame that it reaches without straining. Tie it in loosely and snip out some of the growth if it looks overcrowded.

Top tip

If don't have time to remove all of the weeds in your garden, cut off flowerheads of perennial weeds, such as dandelions, to stop them multiplying rapidly

Water shrubs in pots

Water trees and shrubs in pots now they are growing away fast. It's important that they have a good water supply to keep them cool, as well as supporting growth. Place a large saucer under the pot to avoid staining the patio and to see when compost is soaked through. Water slowly so water seeps into the compost rather than running down the sides into the saucer. A mulch of stones over the compost helps conserve moisture around the roots.



Mulch and refresh compost

Replenish some of the compost in pots planted for the long term. These plants will thrive if the roots get this energy boost. Take off the mulch and keep it separate, then use a trowel to loosen the top 8cm of compost. Dig your fingers among bigger roots to avoid cutting them. Remove as much loose compost as you can, and replace with loam-based compost. Firm it in around exposed roots, water well and put mulch back.

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Keep lawns healthy

May is a good time to give your lawn attention before it gets too hot. If you're laying a new lawn it should be done by the end of the month.

■ This month many people embrace 'No Mow May'. Leaving some areas of grass long is good for wildlife and it can look attractive to mow a path through wildflower areas. For any areas you're keeping short, mow fortnightly to keep the grass neat.

■ Feed the lawn with summer lawn fertiliser. The best conditions for this are when there has been rain recently but the grass itself has dried. Rain forecast again after application is perfect. It's a good idea to spot-weed first with a daisy grubber, so you're not feeding the weeds. Read the packet for the correct dose rate and spread evenly.

Other tasks to do...

- Do the Chelsea chop to get more flowers later in the season
- Take cuttings from plants such as asters and heleniums
- Scrub algae and debris from the surface of bird baths
- Turn compost heaps regularly to speed up the rotting process
- Harden off tender plants
- Remove suckers from roses

What to do now...
in your flower patch

Plant bulbs for a late season show

May is a good month to plant summer and autumn flowering bulbs now that the soil has warmed up. Amarines (above) are a cross between *Amaryllis belladonna* and nerines. They can be planted this month for some exotic autumn colour in pots and borders, flowering in October and November. Plant 10cm apart, with the neck of the bulb just above ground. For late summer colour, try scented *Gladiolus murielae*. Choose a sunny free-draining spot and add grit if soil is heavy. Space bulbs 15cm apart and plant point upwards, at 2-3 times the bulb's depth.

Sow annuals direct

Use a rake to make short drills in a patch of the flower border to sow some annuals straight into the ground. Cornflowers, Californian poppies and linaria still have plenty of time to germinate and flower this summer. Sow a few seeds in each drill, cover with a layer of soil, tamp them down and water. Sowing in drills makes it easy to spot the plants from the weeds and once the seedlings are thinned out they won't look like they are in lines at all.

Divide primroses

Propagate primroses now that they have finished flowering. Clumps of primroses can get congested so dividing them will rejuvenate growth, encourage new offsets and improve next year's flowers. Lift them out of the ground and separate them gently by hand, pulling them apart at the base. Each rosette will have its own roots. Trim the straggly long roots by a third and replant them in the border. Space them out about 15cm apart, firm the plants in and water well to settle them back in.

MONEY SAVER

10 min task

Dig out bindweed, removing as muchroot as you can. Getting on top of it now will save time

Other tasks to do...

- Plant out dahlias now that the soil has warmed up
- Feed flowering plants in containers as buds from
- Deadhead spent flowers regularly to encourage a longer display
- Plant up pots of bedding to grow on indoors

Top tip

Check lupins in the evening for slugs and snails and remove by hand to stop populations getting too large and damaging the plants

Add height to perennial borders

Plant tall perennials such as lupins, delphiniums and verbascum to give height to your flowering beds and borders. Find or make a large gap either near the back of the border or between lower, hummock-shaped plants, where the new plant can tower above and take centre stage. The more light the tall plant gets all around it, the stronger its stem growth will be. Water the plant in its pot first. Next, make a deep hole and water that before adding some organic matter and fertiliser. Firm in the plant well and put in supports for the tallest flowers now before they flop.

NO MAINTENANCE
MAY.

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BETTER FENCING

What to do now...
growing your own

10 min task

Earth up potatoes to increase yield. Potatoes form on the stems as they grow up so adding soil over shoots improves the crop

Harden off tomatoes

Move tomato plants outside during the day to ready them for planting out. Make sure they are sheltered and take them inside at night. A cold frame with a lid is ideal and saves moving plants – just open and shut the lid. Gradually extend the period of time the plants are outside or the lid is open, until they are okay being left out all the time. Keep watering and if leaves pucker, don't worry, they'll soon grow through it. After 10-14 days they are ready for planting if frosts are over.

Thin out parsnips

Parsnips make large plants that need plenty of space, so it's vital to thin them out so they can all grow healthily. Thin them by using one hand to hold the soil down around the plant that you plan to keep, while gently tugging the others around it out of the ground. Go along the row, aiming to remove the weaker plants but ensuring that each plant left has 15cm of space around it. Finish by firming the soil back along the row in case any plants were loosened in the process, and water them all thoroughly.

Plant out lettuce seedlings

Plant some lettuce plugs outside now that they've had a chance to acclimatise to the warmer weather. Soak the roots thoroughly before you plant them into the bed. Unlike hearting types, loose-leaf lettuce can tolerate a bit of shade so it's a useful crop to go with other vegetables such as spinach and beetroot. They should grow away rapidly, so you can start picking in a couple of weeks.

Other tasks to do...

- **Water blueberries in pots with rainwater each time the compost is dry**
- **Sow salad leaf seeds in any gaps on your plot**
- **Sow carrots, chard, dwarf French beans and peas**
- **Pull up any raspberry canes where they're not wanted**
- **Harvest asparagus at 20cm high, cutting below soil level**

Crop of the month

Spring onions

Sow Mar-Sep
Harvest Mar-Oct

Spring onions are easy to grow and don't need much space, making them a perfect vegetable for interplanting between crops that take longer to produce a harvest. They also love cool conditions, so are ideal for growing over winter, as well as starting from seed in late winter for fresh early-summer growth. They are a useful salad vegetable and can be eaten raw or cooked, adding flavour to dishes such as omelettes and stir fries. As part of the onion family, they are high in antioxidants and good for gut health.

HARVESTING

Spring onions take about eight weeks to produce a crop after sowing. Loosen the soil before pulling them up. Spring onions last for four to five days in the fridge.

OUR CHOICES

'White Lisbon'; 'North Holland Blood Red', 'Elody' and 'Guardsman'

Spicy spring onion and herb pancakes

Turn your spring onion harvest into a delicious lunch with these easy pancakes. They go nicely with an apple and carrot slaw. SERVES 2

- 65g chickpea flour
- 65g plain flour
- 35g chopped spring onions (white and green parts)
- 30g mix of chopped parsley, tarragon and fenugreek
- 65g yogurt
- 1 tsp each of chopped chilli, grated ginger and crushed garlic
- ¼ tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- Pinch of granulated sugar (optional)
- 10ml sunflower oil (plus extra for making pancakes)
- Salt and pepper to taste

1. Place all the ingredients, in a bowl and stir well. Whisk in enough water to make a pancake batter of a pouring consistency.
2. Rest the batter for half an hour. If it has thickened too much, you may need to add a little water at this stage.
3. Over a medium heat, pour a ladle of batter into a lightly oiled pan, tilting the pan to cover. When small bubbles form, carefully flip and lower the heat, allowing the pancake to cook, flipping it over again if necessary. Each pancake should take around five minutes to cook.
4. Serve with a fresh slaw.

WHY NOT TRY...

Spring onions sprinkled into a summer salad or fried lightly and added to a courgette, walnut and yoghurt dip

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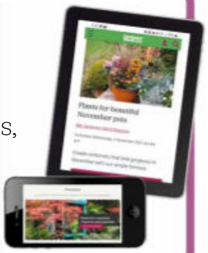

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June

In June we can pick a wide range of fruit and veg harvests, with crops such as strawberries, carrots, broad beans and peas in season this month. It's also a time to enjoy long evenings in the garden when early summer displays are at their peak. To keep borders looking their best, it's a key time for deadheading roses and annuals to keep them flowering, reshaping topiary and unleashing exotic plants

Key task

Deadhead astrantias to keep them flowering. Once all the flowers on a stem have gone over, cut the stem at its base to encourage more blooms

This month's round up...

June is a good time to plant up a summer container. If you include plants that will attract pollinators and butterflies, you may also see long-tailed tits in your garden, as they feed on the eggs of moths and butterflies.

Prune

- Alpines
- Evergreen shrubs and hedges
- Gooseberries and currants
- Grapevines
- Lilac – after flowering
- Spring-flowering shrubs
- Topiary

Sow

- Beetroot
- French beans
- Kale
- Pak choi
- Peas
- Radishes
- Salads
- Spinach
- Tender flowers
- Turnip

Plant

- Brassicas
- Leek seedlings
- Summer bedding
- Tender exotics such as bananas, cannas, colocasia, tithonias
- Tender veg, such as chillies, courgettes, peppers, tomatoes

Harvest

- Asparagus
- Baby carrots
- Broad beans
- Cherries
- Early potatoes
- Peas
- Radishes
- Salad leaves
- Strawberries

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This month's
Star plants

1 Sweet pea 'Anne B Gilroy'
There are so many colours to choose from with sweet peas, they flower for ages and the scent is irresistibly summery. 'Annie B Gilroy' is a bright pink with a strong scent. Sow seeds before Christmas and keep them in a cold frame to plant out in early April.
Flowers Jun-Sep
Height x Spread 1.8m x 45cm

2 *Malope trifida* 'Vulcan'
This is a colourful and easy hardy annual. Sow it in a sunny spot for flowers all summer. As well as adding colour in the border it's good for cut flowers. It may need a bit of support. Sow direct outdoors in April or in seed trays indoors in March.
F Jun-Sep **H x S** 90cm x 45cm

3 *Papaver somniferum* 'Hungarian Blue'
Fill your borders with this beautiful opium poppy. Despite its name its petals are a vivid violet. Opium poppies have showy flowerheads that come in a variety of colours including red, white and mauve, as well as pretty seedpods, which dry well for flower arranging.
F Jun-Aug **H x S** 90cm x 30cm

4 *Campanula takesimana* 'Elizabeth'
Campanulas are useful, pretty plants for shady spots. The Korean bellflower 'Elizabeth' has beautiful pendulous bells with red speckles within, and forms large clumps quickly. It's good for planting beneath trees and shrubs.
F Jun-Aug **H x S** 60cm x 60cm

5 *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'
This salvia is a good border plant that flowers for a long time (especially if you cut it back a bit before the end of the first flush of blooms). It works well in large sweeps through mixed plantings – especially when among different flower shapes such as roses, campanulas or flat-headed achilleas.
F May-Sep **H x S** 50cm x 30cm

What to do now... around the garden

Give borders an early summer tidy

A few simple tasks this month will keep your borders fresh and full of flowers for the rest of summer and beyond. Lots of garden borders are at their peak in June, but in July they can end up looking tired if plants are untended now. Removing spent flowers, weeds, wayward stems and old foliage will instantly improve a border, and there is plenty of time for fresh new growth and flowers to take their place and give the border a new lease of life.

- Keep deadheading roses to encourage more blooms. Snip them back to just above the nearest leaf to keep them tidy and improve the shape of the plant.
- Prop up plants that are struggling to support themselves. Use ready-made supports or canes and string.
- Remove the foliage of early-flowering hardy geraniums, pulmonaria and *Alchemilla mollis* when it starts to look tired, cutting growth back to ground level.
- Use a pair of sharp lawn edgers to keep border margins looking sharp. Regular edging stops grass from rooting in the border.

Tackle topiary

Clip topiary shapes to encourage bushier growth that will sharpen the plant's form, particularly when you give it another pruning later in the year. First, though, check for birds that could still be nesting inside. Next, start snipping off any shoots on the bare stems with secateurs, then use shears to do the rest. Keep the blades flat to the shape to avoid the shears digging in at the tip. Pick off all the clippings, particularly from the top of the plant, where they can collect moisture.

Top tip

Add mulch in gaps between perennials – it will make your border look neater, add nutrients to the soil, and suppress weeds

Prune *Clematis montana*

Cut back spring-flowering *Clematis montana* now that flowering is over. Straggly shoots develop in spring, searching for new supports and if you want to contain its size, trim these back now. Use secateurs to cut shoots back into the framework, to just above a strong pair of leaf buds. The fresh growth emerging from these cuts will be shorter and bear plenty of flowers next spring, resulting in a neater plant. Some of the long shoots could be kept and tied in. Prune before the end of June to be sure new growth will flower.

10 min task

Top up container ponds because water can evaporate quickly when it's hot – pour slowly to avoid disturbing wildlife

Pull out dead daffodil foliage

If you have naturalised daffodils in areas of grass that need mowing, it's best to pull out yellowed or papery daffodil leaves first. They should come away from the bulb easily without any damage. These faded leaves tend to get flattened rather than mown, so this helps to give a clean first cut of the longer grass. Faded daffodil leaves in borders can be tidied away too, once they can be pulled away easily.

Other tasks to do...

- **Make more shrubs by taking softwood cuttings of young shoots that haven't yet flowered**
- **Hoe annual weeds before they flower and set seed**
- **Tie in long stems on honeysuckles, as well as climbing and rambling roses**
- **Move exotic plants outdoors**
- **Mow lawns little and often to encourage a thick sward and increase their resistance to drought**

What to do now...
in your flower patch

Water and feed hanging baskets

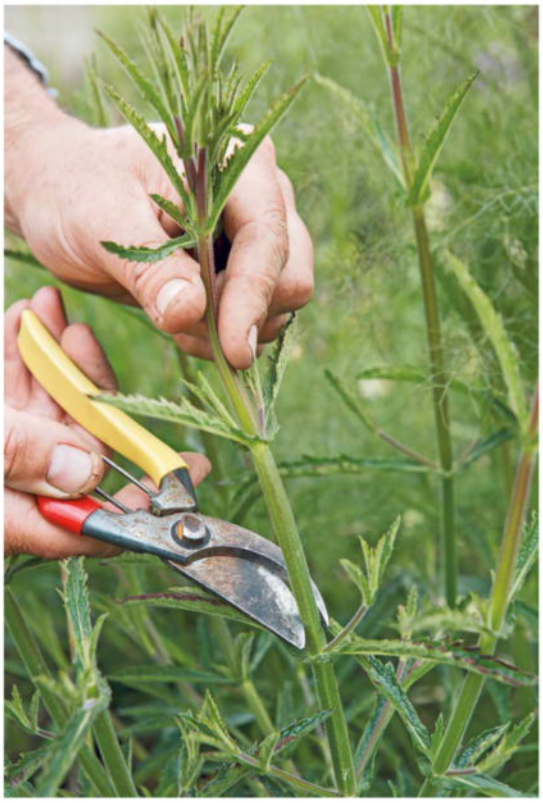
Check hanging baskets regularly, watering whenever the compost feels dry. They hold a lot of plants in limited compost and their need for water increases as they grow. If temperatures really soar this month, consider taking down your baskets, watering them well and moving them into shade until temperatures drop.

Top tip

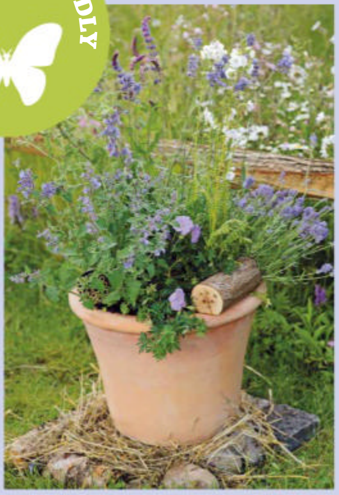
Keep pinching out the shoot tips of fuchsias to encourage more sideshoots, which will result in more flowers and a bushier plant

Prune verbena

Verbena bonariensis is a border favourite, due to its long-lasting purple flowers and tall, airy habit. To stimulate more sideshoots and therefore more flowers, trim back the tall upright stems. Reduce the height by about a third, making your cut just above a pair of leaves. The regrowth will emerge as sideshoots from the top down, making more flowering stems to give the plant greater impact in your border. This also delays flowering, so if you have several plants, you could leave some unpruned, to flower earlier.

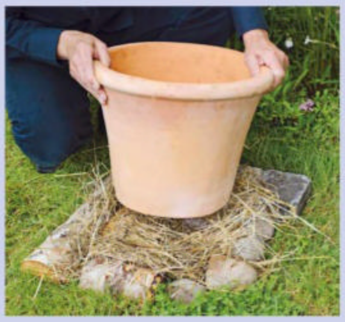


WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

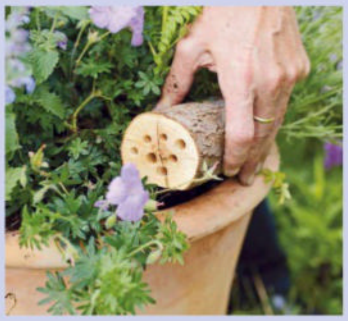


Make a bug friendly pot

Encourage pollinators and ground bugs with a pot-grown feature. This is ideal if space is limited because it helps to attract maximum wildlife by providing hedge-like cover that isn't always possible in a small garden. Use hardy plants to give winter foliage and seedheads for birds.



Make a layer of stones, straw and twigs where insects can take refuge. Keep it level so the pot doesn't topple over.



Add a mix of plants such as salvia, lavender, nepeta and geraniums that pollinators will like. Firm them in and water. Add more bug hides by drilling deep holes into the end of a small log and placing it among the plants at compost level.

Top tip

Plant sunflowers in gaps in borders that will benefit from added height. Sunflowers grow best in the ground, especially if you want a giant plant

Plant out annuals sown indoors

Now there's no risk of frost, move young annuals grown from seed in pots into their final flowering position. Water them first, pick off any damaged or yellow leaves, and pinch out the tip of single-stemmed plants to encourage bushy growth. Use a trowel to plant into the border, then firm back the soil with your hands. Water well, then add mulch around the plant to keep the soil moist while it roots into its new home.

Sunflowers are good annuals to plant out now. Leaving it until this month to plant sunflowers means you will have large plants for planting out, and these will be more resilient in the face of slugs and snails. They will also grow quickly as their roots enter the warm soil. Plant the sunflowers at the same depth as they were in the pot. Water well and stake tall varieties with a bamboo cane or something sturdier in windy spots.

Other tasks to do...

- **Dig up tulip bulbs to dry out and store, for replanting in autumn**
- **Sow biennials and herbaceous perennials for flowers next year**
- **Stake large blooms to stop them flopping over**
- **Make a last sowing of hardy annuals to fill gaps with late colour**
- **Weed carefully between direct-sown annual flower seedlings**

What to do now...

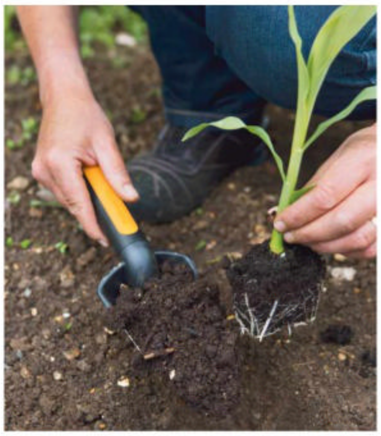
growing your own

Top tip

Look out for bolting onions, garlic and leafy salads and snip off the flowerheads. Harvest bolting crops as soon as you can and use straightaway

Weed around onions

Keep onions clear of weeds so they can grow strongly. Doing this by hand is the best option – a hoe is likely to damage onions' shallow roots, which spread out from the bulbs just under the soil surface. Work between the rows first, pulling out weeds by hand. Next, weed between the plants, holding the onions at the base with one hand while dragging the weeds out close to the bulb. If you do this weekly, weeds are never large enough to disturb the crop.



Plant sweetcorn

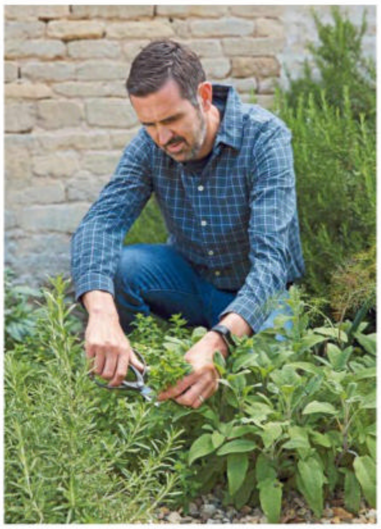
Choose a sunny spot to plant out sweetcorn, once the soil is warm and the day temperatures are high. Hold off if there's a cool spell. Water the pots first, then plant in a group rather than in rows, to aid pollination, which relies on pollen drifting across from plant to plant in the breeze. These will grow into big plants, so space 40cm apart. Firm them in slightly lower than ground level, so when watered, the water pools around them. Mulch well.

10 min task

Pick strawberries daily, when the berries are fully red, to prevent the birds eating them and to enjoy them at their best

Plant winter crops

Plant out some autumn and winter cabbages or Brussels sprouts in a patch of firm soil that gets plenty of sun. If you didn't sow seed, look out for packs of young plants in garden centres and nurseries. Firm the plants in well and cover them with a net to deter birds, because pigeons can ruin the crop very quickly if given a chance.



Harvest herbs

Cut fresh herbs regularly to keep them growing plenty of foliage rather than developing seed. Annual herbs such as coriander and dill will always flower after one or two cuts but regular watering and warm summer nights will keep them growing well for longer. Plan to sow more through the summer. Cut woody herbs such as sage, thyme and rosemary to stimulate more young growth. The flowers won't be suppressed for long but regular picking of new growth will delay blooming.

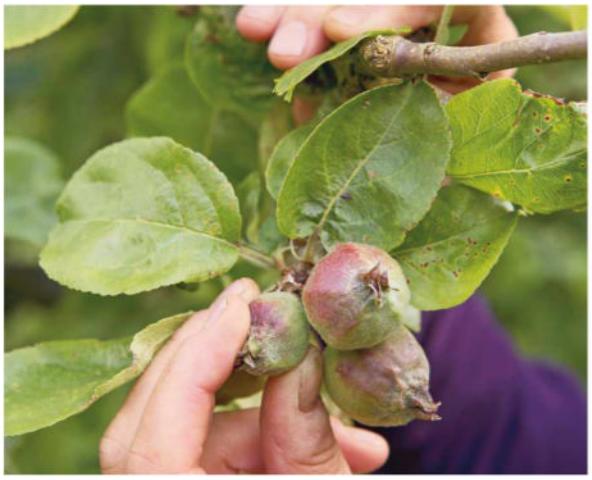
Other tasks to do...

- **Earth up the stems of winter brassicas to help keep them well anchored as they grow**
- **Sow seeds of salad onions, beetroot and oriental greens**
- **Tie in blackberry stems to supports to keep them tidy**
- **Harvest garlic when the leaves turn yellow**
- **Protect ripening fruit from birds, using 20-25mm netting**

Thin out apple crops

Improve the size and quality of your apples by removing excess or misshapen fruitlets now. Apple trees will naturally shed a few fruitlets this month, but if you thin them out yourself, you can select which to keep, and ensure they get enough space and light to develop exceptionally well.

- To remove a fruitlet, support the stem with one hand and pull the unwanted fruit away.
- Keep one or two fruitlets from each cluster and try to leave clusters at 15cm intervals so they have enough space.



Crop of the month

Strawberries

Plant Mar-May, Aug-Oct
Harvest May-Aug

Strawberries are one of the most eagerly anticipated crops of the year and are as much a part of the British summer as, well, rain at Wimbledon. Our true strawberry season begins in late May, peaks in June and July and lasts until about the end of August. Nothing beats the sweet fragrance and taste of strawberries grown in your own garden, and they're also rich in vitamin C.

HARVEST

Wait until the berries are fully red before picking, as ripening stops once strawberries have been harvested. Pinch through the stalks with your finger and thumb to avoid bruising the fruit. Strawberries can be stored, unwashed, in the fridge for a few days but they don't last long.

OUR CHOICES

'Honeoye', Christine', 'Elegance', 'Cambridge Vigour' and 'Symphony'

Strawberry clafoutis

A clafoutis is a sort of cross between a baked custard and a pancake. It is traditionally made with fresh, unstoned cherries, but you can use any soft fruit. Strawberries, particularly well with vanilla and cinnamon. Serve warm or at room temperature with clotted cream or ice cream. SERVES 6

- 400g small strawberries
- 25g unsalted butter, melted
- 90g caster sugar
- 2 free-range eggs
- 1 teaspoon good vanilla extract
- 75g plain flour
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 clementine, zest only
- 300ml whole milk
- 2 tablespoons icing sugar

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C. Find a dish that will hold the strawberries comfortably in one layer, then gently tip out the strawberries, brush the tin with a little of the melted butter, and pop the strawberries back in the dish.
2. Whisk together the caster sugar, remaining melted butter, eggs and vanilla extract, then add the flour, cinnamon and zest, and whisk until smooth. Pour in the milk slowly, whisking continuously until you have a smooth batter. Pour the mixture over the strawberries, then bake on the top shelf of the oven for 30 minutes, until the custard is just set, and the edges of the dish lightly browned and risen. Let the clafoutis cool, then use a sieve to dust it with the icing sugar before serving.

WHY NOT TRY...

Strawberries baked into almond cakes or macerated with sugar and then blitzed into a purée for cocktails

EXCUSE ME,
CAN I HAVE MY
BALL BACK PLEASE?

**SOME THINGS ARE GUARANTEED THIS SUMMER.
LIKE DURAPOST®.**

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**DuraPost®
BETTER FENCING**

July

July is a time of abundance and this richness of colour and crops keeps gardeners busy all month – there are crops to feed, harvest and train, plants to deadhead and there's still time to add more to any gaps in the border

Key task

Plant hollyhocks at the back of a border to add height – they can reach 2m. They'll flower until September and self seed to create more plants for free

This month's round up..

Look out for baby sparrows when you're out in the garden this month, searching for insects and larvae. They'll feed on aphids too, so not using chemicals to get rid of these pests will help encourage more birds into your garden.

Prune

- Apples and pears
- Cherry trees – after fruiting
- Gooseberries
- Rambling roses – after flowering
- Redcurrants and whitecurrants

Sow

- Biennial flowers
- Calabrese
- Carrots
- Chicory
- Chinese cabbages
- Florence fennel
- French and runner beans
- Pak choi
- Radishes
- Spring cabbages
- Turnips

Plant

- Bedding plants
- Calabrese
- Courgettes
- Herbs
- Leeks
- Winter brassicas

Harvest

- Beetroot
- Carrots
- Courgettes
- Garlic
- Onions
- Peas
- Potatoes
- Salad leaves
- Soft fruit
- Spinach
- Tomatoes

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This month's

Star plants

1 Cosmos
These annuals flower for months and are easy to grow from seed. Available in colours from white through to pink, they're perfect for filling summer containers and gaps in the border. This variety 'Seashells Mixed' has trumpet shaped petals.
Flowers Jun-Oct
Height x Spread 90cm x 50cm

2 Lavender 'Imperial Gem'
Lavenders come not in deep purple forms such as 'Imperial Gem', lilac shades and pink and white, too. They are worthy plants for any well-drained border, with beautifully fragrant flowers and evergreen leaves that look good throughout the year.
F Jun-Sep **H x S** 60cm x 45cm

3 Dahlia 'Figaro Mixed'
July is the start of the dahlia season – a time that never fails to put a skip in the step of all lovers of colour. Dahlias flower until October and there's a huge range. 'Figaro Mixed' is a mix of dwarf bedding dahlias that make small, bushy plants, perfect for the edge of borders or pots.
F Jul-Oct **H x S** 30cm x 30cm

4 *Cleome hassleriana* 'Violet Queen'
This bright annual, perfect for the back of a summer border, is known as the spider flower. Its striking, scented blooms add an exotic look to borders in late summer. It's a half-hardy annual, so best sown under glass in spring.
F Jul-Sep **H x S** 1.5m x 50cm

5 Penstemon 'White Bedder'
Penstemons come in shades of pink, red, purple, blue and white and are ideal for filling summer gaps. When the spring bulbs fade and the early summer plants are beginning to lose their lustre, pop in a penstemon. This one is a pure bright white, the perfect foil for the darker greens of late summer.
F Jul-Oct **H x S** 60cm x 45cm

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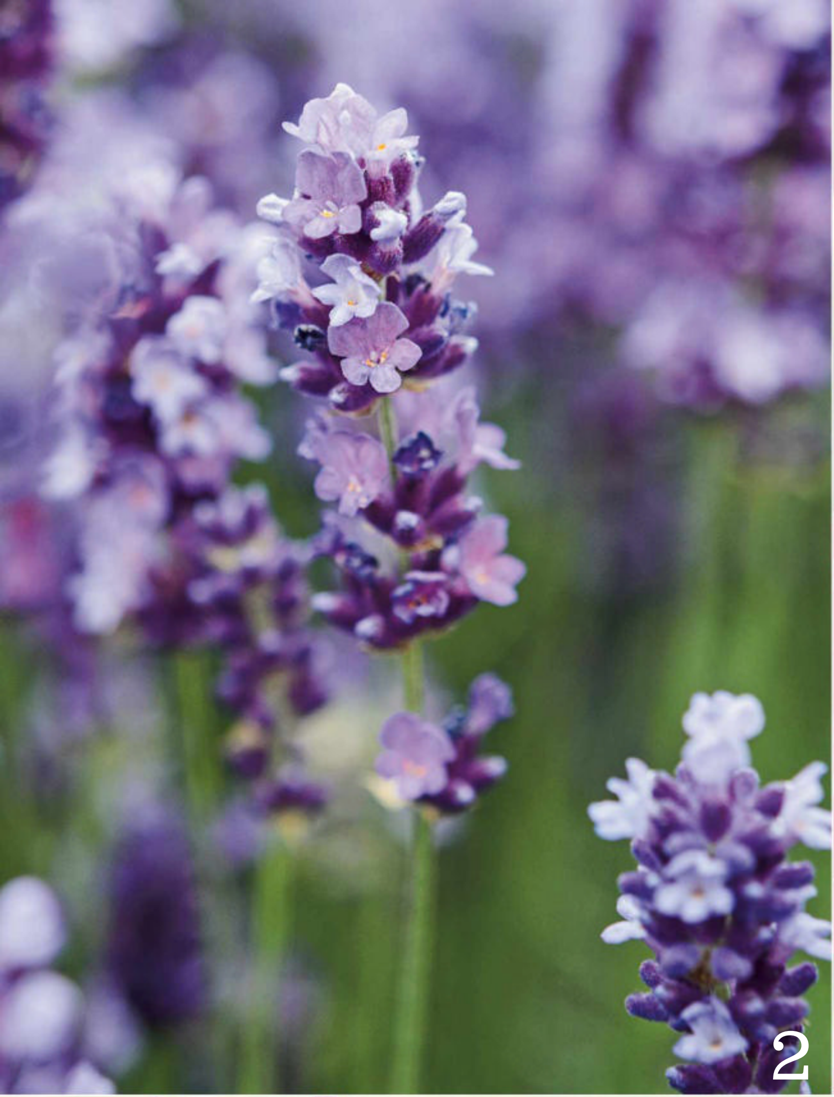
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What to do now...

around the garden

Prepare plants for holidays

Soak potted plants thoroughly before you go away on holiday and stand them in a saucer or tray so that if there is any rain, some moisture is available. You could fill the saucer too, so there is a supply of water for a day or two. Check the forecast and if you're expecting bright, sunny days, move them all into shade to reduce water loss. You could also cut off some off the oldest lower leaves to reduce water loss.

Stop dandelions seeding

If you let dandelions flower in your lawn they will soon produce seeds, which will drift and spread further, so remove them by hand using a daisy grubber or narrow trowel. Press in as deep as possible to remove the maximum amount of tap root. If there's any shallow root left, it will have enough energy to grow a rosette of leaves at the surface again. Patch up any gaps left with more turf, or sow grass seed.

Maintain your mower

Remove wet grass clippings from the bottom of your mower so they don't clog blades. Switch off the power to the blades, then turn the mower over. Use a blunt scraper to get the worst off, then a stiff brush to finish. Finally, give the blades and rotary mechanism a spray of penetrating oil.

Reduce rose diseases

Pick off faded leaves of roses, particularly if showing signs of blackspot. Look for them on the ground too and pick all of them up. The spores of fungal diseases such as mildew and blackspot will persist on fallen leaves around the plant, making further infections inevitable, both this summer and well into next year. Use a bucket to collect up all the leaves and put them in your municipal garden waste collection, which is composted at such high temperatures that the fungal spores will be killed off.

Other tasks to do...

- **Water newly laid turf during hot, dry spells**
- **Trim conifer topiary to define the edges and keep it looking sharp**
- **Keep bird baths clean and topped up with fresh water**

Top tip

Leave your watering cans filled up when you've finished watering. A full can is less likely to blow over and get damaged in windy weather

Mist plants in the greenhouse

Use a hand sprayer to mist plants. The spray instantly lowers the temperature and increases the humidity around your plants. In turn, this slows down water loss from the leaves and reduces the stress that plants experience from the drying effects of high temperatures. Red spider mite hate humidity, so misting also helps to control them. Mist as often as you can when it's warm. Fill the sprayer afterwards so that next time you mist them, the water you are spraying is the same temperature as it is in the greenhouse.

What to do now…
in your flower patch

Add butterfly friendly plants

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Attract more butterflies to your garden with a boost of flower power. Planting a wide range of different flowers will enrich the diversity of insect visitors and create a healthy ecosystem. July can be hot and dry, so water your new plants regularly until they're growing away strongly. Plants in containers need more water than those in the ground and are best moved into a little shade if there's a heatwave. The examples below are all drought tolerant once their roots are well established.

- Give eryngiums a sunny position with very good drainage. These striking silvery-blue plants with thistle-like flowers do best in poor soil, so a gravel garden is ideal, but most free-draining garden soils will suit.
- Choose a very sunny, well-drained spot for lavender. This drought-tolerant shrub makes a great border edging or low hedge, and does well in pots too. The fragrant flowers attract both butterflies and a host of bees.
- Plant scabious in a mixed border in plenty of sun. Choose from varieties with pink, mauve, white or dark burgundy flowers. Deadhead regularly to keep them in full flower. Protect young plants from slugs and snails.
- Position echinacea in the centre of a sunny border. They thrive in rich soil, but need good drainage. The long-lasting flowers stand on sturdy stems, and the attractive seedheads provide food for birds.

10 min task

Plant autumn crocuses (colchicum) for a display this autumn – they come in white and pink

Keep sweet peas flowering

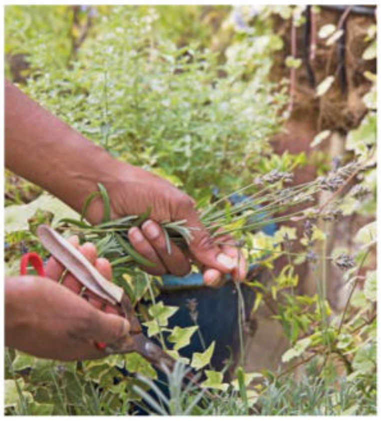
Pick sweet peas every day to fill your home with sweet fragrance and prolong flowering for as long as possible. Flower production will gradually slow down and eventually stop if you allow seed pods to form. Cut the flower stalks just above a leaf, with scissors or snips. Also check for any faded flowers you missed that are starting to form pods. Regular feeding and watering will also boost flowering. They'll go to seed faster in dry spells, so give them a long soak, then add a thick mulch of garden compost.

Keep rambling roses under control

Tie in the long new shoots on rambling and climbing roses to save them from snapping in the wind and to make sure they cover their supports and flower next year. Wear gloves to protect you from thorns. Pull the stems down carefully to avoid snapping them and tie them to their support with soft string, making it loose enough for the stem to expand as it grows. The more horizontal the stems are, the better they will be at flowering along the whole length rather than just at the tips. Prune out any stems that are heading off in the wrong direction or crowding into other plants.

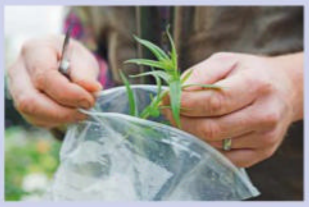
Prune back lavender

Use secateurs or scissors to cut off the lavender flowers that have faded but still have enough oils in them to provide a scented bunch for drying when hung indoors. Snip the stems right back into the foliage rather than leaving unsightly stubs. Tidy any unruly stems by cutting them back selectively to keep the bush in shape, and stop it dropping over lawns, paths and other plants. Leave the rest for pruning at the end of the summer.

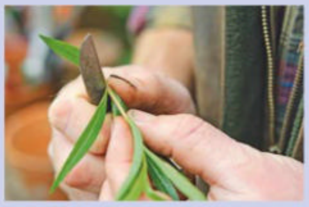


Take cuttings of penstemons

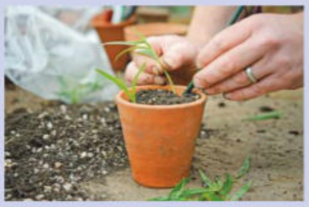
Penstemons will not always survive the cold of winter, so take cuttings from those in your garden now so that any lost can be replaced. Put pots of cuttings in a cold frame and keep them watered or misted. In the warm conditions of July they'll root in a few weeks.



Cut off a few of the thickest 10cm-long, non-flowering shoots and put them in a polythene bag to stop them losing water.



Trim the cutting immediately below a bud at the base and remove the lower foliage, leaving a couple of leaf sets at the top.



Put the cutting in a pot of gritty, peat-free propagation compost. Use a dibber to make the hole first, then firm in gently.

Other tasks to do...

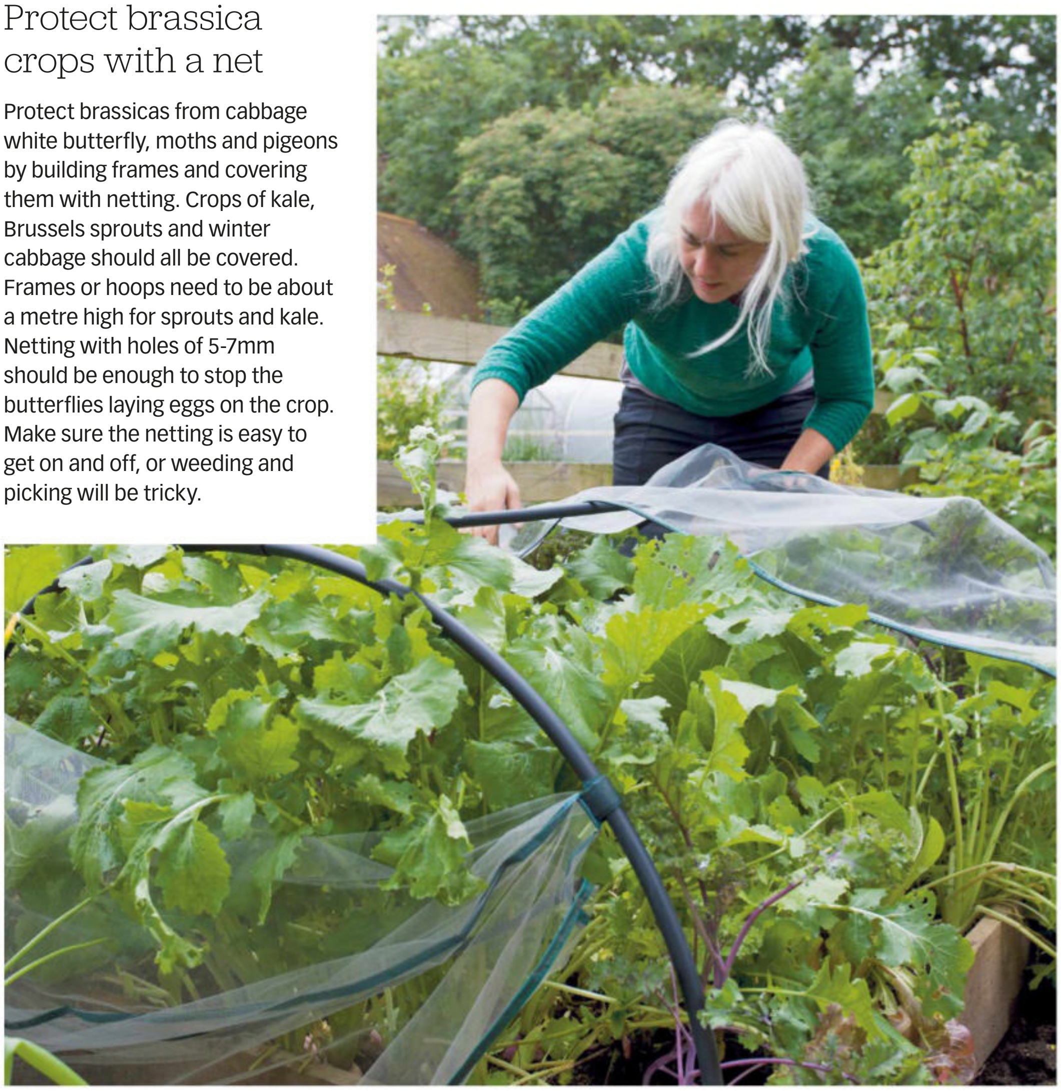
- **Keep deadheading bedding plants and remove any tatty or diseased leaves**
- **Give late-flowering perennials a boost with organic fertiliser**
- **Pinch out fuchsia shoots to make them bushier**
- **Trim back any alpines that are looking a bit untidy**

What to do now...

growing your own

Protect brassica crops with a net

Protect brassicas from cabbage white butterfly, moths and pigeons by building frames and covering them with netting. Crops of kale, Brussels sprouts and winter cabbage should all be covered. Frames or hoops need to be about a metre high for sprouts and kale. Netting with holes of 5-7mm should be enough to stop the butterflies laying eggs on the crop. Make sure the netting is easy to get on and off, or weeding and picking will be tricky.



Top tip

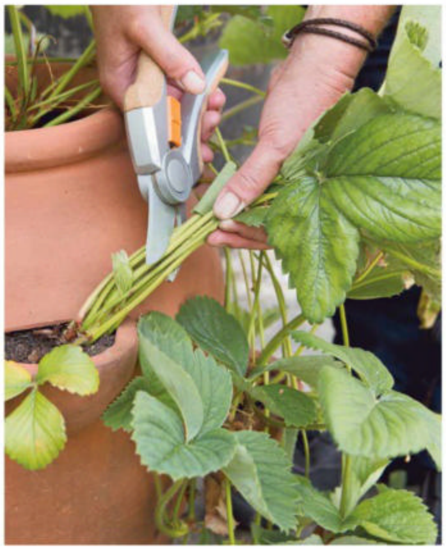
Protect rows of carrots with fleece to prevent female carrot flies from laying eggs on your crop. Sow 'Fly Away' if starting a new crop, which has some resistance

Harvest lettuces

Check that hearting lettuces are ready to harvest by pressing gently into the middle of the plant – it should feel firm at the centre. If so, gather up the outer leaves around the heart and cut the stem just below the first leaves using a sharp knife, to take the lettuce off whole. The lower leaves can be tatty, so trim off if necessary. Check for slugs – they often hide where lower leaves sprout from the main stem.

Tidy up strawberry plants

- Trim back excess runners that are developing on strawberry plants in pots. These new young plants have nowhere to root into outside the pot, so will be using energy from the main plant for support.
- Trace the string-like runners back to where they originate on the plant and snip them off at that point.
- Alternatively, if you have room, peg down the runners into their own pots, to grow on into new plants that will crop next year. Strawberries need to be replaced every three or four years, so this way you'll have plenty of plants to take over.



Pick blackcurrants

Snip off the ripened sprigs of fruit, cupping them in one hand as you cut with the other. Lay them in a shallow basket without stacking them, so they don't bruise. Harvest only ripened fruit. Blackcurrants will continue to ripen this month, depending on the variety. Try to keep fruits clean so they don't need a lot of washing, because moisture encourages mould. Pick them off the sprigs and cook or freeze.

Feed your crops

Keep fruit-bearing crops in production by continuing to feed them. The type of plant food you use will depend on how much time you have. Whichever method you choose, only feed plants that have been watered recently because an instant concentration of nutrients can scorch dry plant tissue.

Choose the right nutrient ratio for your crops. The major nutrients in fertilisers have specific benefits. High nitrogen feeds encourage leafy growth, good for lettuce and brassicas, but not tomatoes. Phosphate-high feeds support roots so are great to use when planting. Potassium encourages flowering and fruit set so high-potassium feeds are best for fruiting crops.

- Feed pot-grown fruiting crops such as tomatoes, chillies and cucumbers, weekly by adding a liquid fertiliser to the watering can before watering.
- Scatter a dose of granular slow-release fertiliser around the plant and water the feed in as an alternative to liquid feeding if you're short of time.
- Read the instructions to get the correct dosage. It varies with the product and different groups of plants. Overfeeding can scorch plants and distort growth.

Other tasks to do...

- **Harvest and store garlic when the leaves turn yellow**
- **Earth up brassicas to keep them well anchored**
- **Sow seeds of kohl rabi, radish and oriental greens**
- **Tie in the new canes of cultivated blackberries**
- **Pick blueberries once they've developed their full colour**

Crop of the month

French beans

Sow Apr-Jul
Harvest Jun-Oct

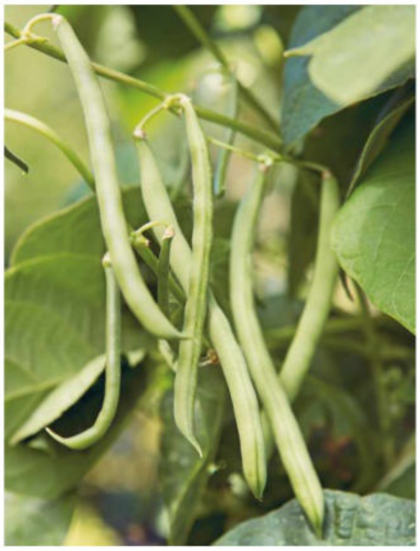
Originating from Central and South America, *Phaseolus vulgaris* was brought to Europe in the 16th century by Christopher Columbus and subsequently became very popular in France. Green pods are most common, but there are yellow, purple and cream varieties too. This bean group also includes haricot and flageolet types, which are grown to produce dried beans. French beans are rich in many nutrients including vitamins A and B, iron and folic acid.

HARVEST

Pick when at least 8cm long, once the pods snap easily but before the seeds inside start to swell, except with haricot or flageolet beans. Harvest regularly to encourage heavier crops, and don't leave over-mature pods on the plants, even if they have spoiled. Freeze whole beans when just picked, while they are young and tender.

OUR CHOICES

Climbing: 'Cobra', 'Golden Gate', 'Cosse Violette' (purple), 'Blue Lake'
Dwarf: 'Delinel' and 'Stanley'



Burrata with almonds, French beans and peas

This easy dish is a lovely sharing starter, best served with a couple of slices of toasted sourdough bread. You could also add thinly sliced radishes– just pop them into a bowl of cold water so they are crunchy, then drain and stir in. SERVES 2

For the burrata salad
- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ tablespoon olive oil
- 50g flaked almonds
- ½ teaspoon sea salt flakes
- 2 teaspoons Aleppo pepper
- 1 nice burrata, at room temperature
- Two handfuls fresh French beans, topped and tailed
- Small bowl peas, either freshly podded or defrosted from frozen

For the dressing
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon sea salt flakes
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper

1 Take the burrata out of the fridge about 45 minutes before you want to eat.

2 Heat the oil and butter in a frying pan on a medium heat, then when foaming, add flaked almonds, sea salt and one teaspoon of the Aleppo pepper. Fry for four to five minutes until golden brown, stirring frequently to brown evenly. Turn off the heat and set aside.

3 Add the French beans to a pan of boiling water and cook for three to five minutes until they're done to your liking. Add the peas and cook for a further minute, then drain well.

4 Whisk the lemon juice, salt flakes, olive oil and ground black pepper together for the dressing, then stir almost all of it through the French beans and peas. Arrange them on a serving plate and pop the burrata in the middle of this. Drizzle the remaining dressing over the top, then scatter over the flaked almonds and the remaining teaspoon of Aleppo pepper. Serve warm, with some toasted bread alongside.

WHY NOT TRY...
Green beans in a salad with feta and tomatoes or added to curries and stir fries

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August

Whether it's heatwaves or torrential rain, August is a month with plenty to keep us busy – either frantically trying to keep everything watered or all the crops picked – but it's also a beautiful and glorious month to just enjoy being out in the garden

Key task

Gather cut flowers to fill your vases indoors – picking flowers regularly will also prevent plants setting seed and encourage more blooms

This month's round up...

This is a good month to add more pollinator-friendly plants if your garden is looking a bit sparse, because butterflies and hoverflies will be looking for nectar and pollen before they enter hibernation, migrate or die.

Prune

- Early summer-flowering shrubs
- Hedges
- Honeysuckle (climbing)
- Lavender – after flowering
- Rambling roses
- Wisteria

Sow

- Corn salad
- Hardy annuals
- Onions
- Oriental vegetables
- Radishes
- Rocket
- Spring cabbages
- Winter lettuce

Plant

- Autumn-flowering bulbs
- Heathers
- Potted chrysanthemums
- Salad seedlings
- Strawberry runners
- Winter brassicas, such as kale

Harvest

- Beetroot
- Chillies
- Courgettes
- French and runner beans
- Herbs
- Raspberries
- Summer squashes
- Sweetcorn
- Tomatoes

F **1**

S **2**

S **3**

M **4** BANK HOLIDAY SCOTLAND

T **5**

W **6**

T **7**

F **8**

S **9**

S **10**

M **11**

T **12**

W **13**

T **14**

F **15**

S **16**

S **17**

M **18**

T **19**

W **20**

T **21**

F **22**

S **23**

S **24**

M **25** BANK HOLIDAY UK, EXCL. SCOTLAND

T **26**

W **27**

T **28**

F **29**

S **30**

S **31**

1

2

3

4

5

This month's
Star plants

1 *Echinacea pallida*

This echinacea is less showy than many as the petals hang in an elegant aurora. It's very understated and refined, but makes a great contrast with showier flowers in the border. Best in full sun with decent drainage, especially to reduce the effects of winter wet, it is a good choice for a gravel garden.
Flowers Jun-Sep
Height x Spread 1.2m x 50cm

2 *Passiflora caerulea*

Passion flowers *may* look exotic but they are hardy and vigorous in most areas if sheltered from the worst winds. This climber flowers for a long period through summer into autumn. Plant in a sunny spot – a south-facing wall is ideal.
F Jul-Oct **H x S** 10m x 4m

3 Single dahlias

Dahlias such as 'Stargazer' are invaluable in the border, providing flowers over a long period. Single dahlias in particular are good for attracting bees, because they are rich in nectar and produce lots of flowers for months on end.
F Jul-Oct **H x S** 75cm x 30cm

4 Red hot poker

Kniphofias, known as red hot pokers, bring late summer colour and height to the border, with flowers in hot red through to yellow and orange. There are also dwarf varieties such as 'Orange Vanilla Popsicle' if you want to add a vibrantm exotic twist to containers.
F Aug-Sep **H x S** 80cm x 50cm

5 Buddleia

There are many reasons to grow buddleias – they look wonderful, attract butterflies and they're fragrant too. These shrubs also have a long flowering season, and tolerate a wide range of soils, as long as the site is sunny. Pruning couldn't be easier. 'Buzz Magenta' is a dwarf variety that can be planted in containers.
F Jun-Oct **H x S** 1.2m x 1.2m

What to do now... around the garden

Feed exotic plants

Give exotic plants in pots a feed to boost their energy levels and keep them happy. Fast growers such as ginger lilies (hedychium), castor oil plant (ricinus) and Chinese rice paper plant (tetrapanax) will have exhausted all the nutrients in the compost, which means they are now dependent on you for nourishment. To keep in the habit of feeding for the rest of the growing season, add a half-strength liquid food to your watering can each time you water your plants. Use a high-potassium feed such as tomato food for flowering plants and an all-purpose feed for foliage plants.

Top tip

If you have gaps in the border, think ahead to next year – it's a chance to add plants such as eremurus to provide colour and height next August

Start forcing festive bulbs

You can have spring flowers by Christmas if you plant bulbs now. Look for 'prepared' bulbs, which have been given a period of cold in summer to initiate early root development. Hyacinths, narcissi and tulips are popular choices. Plant the bulbs close together, but not touching, in a tray of bulb fibre, or in individual pots, ideally topped with grit or vermiculite. Place them somewhere cool and dark for several weeks until shoots appear before bringing them into the light.

Prune pyracantha

Prune back the new shoots on pyracanthas to show off the ripening berries. Snip back the newest shoots above the fruit to a short spur. The regrowth will be short and will flower next year. Prune back long shoots to tidy up the shape of trained forms, such as espaliers on a wall, and trim the ends if they are growing out further than you would like.

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Top up ponds

Keep ponds topped up in hot weather as water will evaporate and they are a key habitat for wildlife. Dragonflies and damsonflies are active on ponds now, laying eggs on the stems and leaves of pond plants.

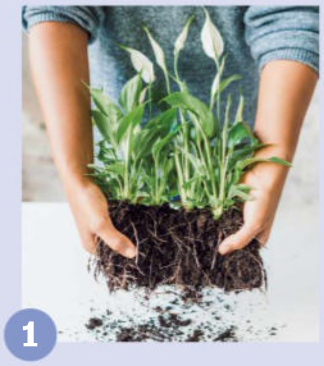
Other tasks to do...

- **Prepare an area for late-summer sowing of hardy annuals**
- **Label chrysanthemums and dahlias for easy identification when you dig them up for winter**
- **Trim established hornbeam and beech hedges towards the end of August**
- **Scarify and aerate lawns to improve airflow around the roots of the grass**

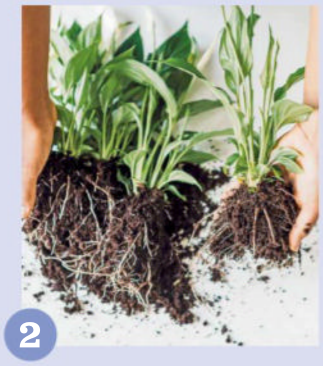
MONEY SAVER

Propagate peace lilies

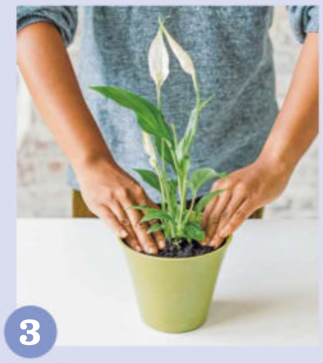
Dividing peace lilies will keep these useful house plants thriving and increase your collection. If you have a peace lily that is quick to dry out and the roots look squashed in their pots, division will give the roots extra room to grow and save you from having to deal with a stressed plant.



1 Ease the plant out of its pot once you see roots growing from the bottom of the pot. Pull at the roots to open up the rootball.



2 Pull the plant into clumps. Your pot may have lots of small plants but if there is just one, divide it gently, with roots attached.



3 Fill new pots with peat-free potting compost and add one clump to each. Add more compost, firm in and water well.

What to do now… in your flower patch

Add late colour to borders

Plant some later-flowering perennials, such as this pretty crocosmia, to improve areas that are lacking in colour as the season progresses. There is plenty of choice: asters, chrysanthemums, heleniums and rudbeckias will all flower on for weeks yet. Make sure there is enough space between plants and mix compost into the planting hole. Give the plant a good soaking, then once in place, firm the soil around the rootball and water again. Add mulch to help hold moisture at the roots.

Collect flower seeds

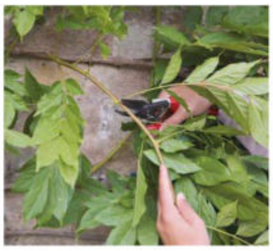
Extend your planting for less by collecting seed from perennials and annuals that have flowered. Choose a dry day and gather the seedheads into a paper bag. Check that the seeds are mature; they should be easy to remove from the stalks or husks. Umbellifers such as orlaya, fennel, and ammi are ideal for collecting now. They may need to be dried more, in which case place them on paper on a sunny windowsill. Once the seeds are dried, separate it from the husk and store in labelled envelopes ready for autumn or spring sowing.

30 min task

Look for perennial weeds hiding in your borders among shrubs and perennials. Dig them out, removing all the roots

Tidy up roses

Snip the old flowers off roses that have finished flowering. Use secateurs or snips to cut back weak flower stems and tidy the shape of the plant by heading back old flower stems that have extended beyond the canopy. Cut these unruly stems back below the rest so that regrowth doesn't disrupt the shape again. Rake up and collect all the debris in a trug. If diseases such as black spot are a concern, cut the spread by putting the waste in the garden bin.



Prune wisteria

Trim back whippy shoots after the flowers have finished. Cut these stems back to about five or six leaves. The old flower stems can be pruned out too. Then trim any shoots that are starting to twine up nearby drainpipes or into guttering.

Other tasks to do…

- **Leave watering cans and containers outside to fill with rainwater to give to acid-loving plants**
- **Keep deadheading, but remember to leave a few flowers intact if you want to harvest seeds soon**
- **Take semi-ripe cuttings from flowering shrubs**

Top tip

Check dahlias in pots at least every couple of days, even if it rains, and give them a soak if the compost feels dry below the surface

Keep dahlias flowering

Maximise your dahlia display by regularly doing a few simple things. Start by snipping off the spent blooms every few days. Faded flowers and new buds can be tricky to tell apart, but remember that flower buds are a rounded shape, while the spent flowers, after losing their petals, are pointed at the top. Water dahlias regularly during dry spells, especially if soil is free-draining, and add a half-strength high potassium liquid feed to your can each time you water them.

What to do now...

growing your own

Plant out young chard plants for winter

Chard plants from seed sown this summer should be ready for planting, and doing so now helps roots to establish, so you can enjoy pickings through winter. This plant is happiest in moisture-retentive soil and full sun, though it copes with a bit of shade better than most veg.

- Weed the area, then sprinkle over general fertiliser before raking it level.
- Firm the soil along the row first. Soak the plants in their modules, then plant 10cm apart in rows spaced 45cm apart.
- Firm them in well, then finish by giving them a good soak.

Top tip

Sow some quick-growing winter salad crops now for pickings in autumn – try mizuna, pak choi and polycress

Plant sprouting broccoli

Plant sprouting broccoli now, to harvest from next January to May. Brassicas grow best in firm, free-draining soil that hasn't been manured and that hasn't had brassicas growing in it for at least two years.

- Space plants 45cm apart and plant them deep, up to the first set of true leaves, to help them develop a strong, thick, main stem that will support the growth.
- Protect from butterflies and pigeons with fine netting over a structure at least 1.2m high.
- Keep the plants well watered and support each one with a sturdy cane once they start growing.

Check greenhouse tomatoes

Check tomatoes for ripeness once they turn from green to red, yellow, orange or whatever the variety promises. Give them a gentle squeeze or pick one and taste. Cut off leaves around ripening trusses to get more light to the fruit, for more even ripening. When picking, cut them back to the main stem. Reduce watering now for better flavour.

Cut back potato crops

If potato foliage is showing signs of blight, then cut it down at the base now. The tubers won't get any bigger if the leaves have died back, so cutting off and binning diseased foliage will help stop the fungus infecting the tubers.

Other tasks to do...

- **Press sweetcorn kernels with your fingernail to check for milky sap – this means the crop is ready**
- **Harvest herbs, taking snips from the tips of young growth**
- **Sow Japanese onions for an early crop next summer**
- **Prune summer raspberries once all the fruit has been picked from the cane**

Crop of the month

Tomatoes

Sow Feb-Jun
Harvest Jul-Oct

Full of flavour and easy to grow, it's no surprise tomatoes are such a popular crop. Growing basil nearby may help improve the flavour of tomatoes, while borage could help to deter tomato hornworm. Tomatoes are good for the skin and rich in potassium. They may also protect the cardiovascular system and colon, and may help ward off some cancers – particularly prostate. They have properties that could reduce the risk of heart disease and blood clots and lower cholesterol. Eat raw or cook in pasta sauces, stews and casseroles to boost the available antioxidants and make them easier to absorb.

HARVESTING

Leave tomatoes on the plant so that they can ripen naturally as this improves the flavour as they will sit happily on the plant for two weeks or more. Tomatoes tend to lose flavour if kept in the fridge. Tomatoes can be frozen whole, but they will become mushy, so it's best to purée them.

OUR CHOICES

Bush: 'Cherry Falls'; cordon: 'Alicante', 'Golden Sunrise', 'Outdoor Girl'; cherry: 'Gardener's Delight', 'Sungold'; beef: 'Costoluto Fiorentino'

Tomato, thyme and ricotta tart

Perfect eaten outdoors, with a glass of rosé and a light green salad. You don't have to roast the tomatoes, but a brief stint in the oven does add a depth of flavour. SERVES 4

- 250g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1½ tsp sea salt flakes
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- Handful thyme sprigs
- 320g ready-rolled puff pastry sheet, chilled
- 150g ricotta
- 4 free-range eggs
- 1 lemon, zest only

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan. Pop the halved tomatoes in a roasting tin large enough to hold them all in one layer, then mix well with the olive oil, half a teaspoon salt and grated garlic, turning them cut side up. Scatter with most of the thyme and roast for 20 minutes.
2. Once the tomatoes are cooked, line a small, deep roasting tin with the chilled puff pastry – you want it to come up the sides so it holds in all the filling.
3. Beat the ricotta, eggs, lemon zest, one teaspoon of sea salt and garlic, then pour it over the pastry. Arrange the cooked tomatoes over the top, scatter over the remaining thyme, then transfer to the oven to bake for 30 minutes, after which the pastry should be cooked and the centre of the tart just wobbly.
4. Leave to sit in the tin for at least 10 minutes to cool, then serve either hot or at room temperature.

WHY NOT TRY...
Homemade tomato sauce on pasta, or use any gluts to make tomato chutney

September

This is the first of the autumn months and the evenings will slowly start drawing in, but it's also time to enjoy the end of the veg season with plenty of harvests reaching their peak, including tomatoes and potatoes, and the beginning of spring bulb planting

Key task

Check crops regularly to ensure you're harvesting veg like tomatoes and chillies at peak ripeness, and freeze or cook excess to see you through winter

This month's round up...

While you're busy tidying or saving seeds, look out for hedgehogs before they hibernate and common carder bumblebees, one of the last bumblebees on the wing. Workers may be almost bald from visiting tubular flowers.

Prune

- Blackberries
- Hedges
- Hybrid berries
- Summer-flowering shrubs – after flowering
- Summer-fruiting raspberries

Sow

- Hardy annuals
- Japanese onions
- Oriental leaves
- Spinach
- Winter lettuce

Plant

- Autumn-flowering heathers
- Fruit trees and bushes
- Ornamental cabbages
- Potted cyclamen
- Spring bulbs
- Strawberry runners

Harvest

- Autumn cabbages
- Autumn raspberries
- Chillies and sweet peppers
- Courgettes
- Kale
- Maincrop potatoes
- Peaches
- Tomatoes
- Tree fruit, such as apples and pears

M **1**
T **2**
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T **25**
F **26**
S **27**
S **28**
M **29**
T **30**

This month's

Star plants

1 *Alstroemeria* Inticancha Maya

Alstroemerias are excellent cut flowers, long-flowering border perennials and stars of patio containers. This variety is part of the Inticancha series and is a dwarf perennial that comes in many shades including bi-coloured 'Maya'.

Flowers May-Nov
Height x Spread 40cm x 40cm

2 *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers'

Rudbeckias provide cheerful yellow daisies at the summer's end, some very tall and others more modest. This one stands out because of the little roll to the petals. It works really well with other late-season perennials such as asters, heleniums and all the grasses. Full sun is best. Good for butterflies.

F Aug-Oct **H x S** 1.2m x 60cm

3 Hydrangea 'Zorro'

Hydrangeas come in two flower forms – mopheads, which have large, rounded flowerheads packed with four-petalled/ray florets that never set seeds; and lacecaps, such as 'Zorro', with fewer ray florets in a ring around a central cluster of tiny, seed-producing florets. Flowers pink if soil is chalky and blue if acidic.

F Jul-Sep **H x S** 1.5m x 1.5m

4 *Caryopteris incana* 'Delft Blue'

Blue is always the colour that brings peace to a noisy border. Among all the splashiness of late summer it is nice to have a bit of soft blue to calm things down. Caryopteris is a useful late flowering shrub that thrives in full sun. Propagate from softwood cuttings.

F Aug-Sep **H x S** 1m x 1.2m

5 *Ammi majus*

This is a plant that has been giving all summer. Unlike the hot summer stars, it's a steady plant with umbelliferous flowers of fresh white. A great foil for both early roses and later dahlias and salvias and it's good for pollinators.

F Jun-Sep **H x S** 1.2m x 40cm

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What to do now...

around the garden

10 min task

Check hedges for leading shoots that are growing too tall. Strong upright shoots spoil the shape and discourage branching so cut back now

Remove tree seedlings

Pull or dig out tree seedlings before they grow their long tap root that makes them hard to dig out without disturbing other plants. Tree seedlings can germinate under other foliage or at the base of shrubs, so you may not have spotted them before, particularly in areas you don't often cultivate. Remove before they are a problem.

Other tasks to do...

- **Trim conifer hedges**
- **Cut back plants showing signs of mildew**
- **Make your last mow, depending on the weather**
- **Dig up and divide clumps of early summer-flowering perennials**
- **Water newly planted perennials, shrubs and trees in dry spells**
- **Order new trees ready for planting in autumn**

Add pond nets

Pull a net out over your pond before the leaves begin to fall. Even if you have no overhanging trees they can be blown across into the water. Tree and shrub leaves decomposing in the water leads to deoxygenation, which can kill fish and plants. Black netting is the least visually intrusive option and you can lift it off easily to get rid of fallen leaves. More permanent, rigid, galvanised netting can be installed, but it's a more costly option.

WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Save sweet pea seeds

MONEY SAVER

Harvest sweet pea seeds as you take them down, so you are ready to sow in late autumn or next spring. The small, hard seeds will rattle in their dry pods when ready. Most varieties will come true from seed, but seed from F1 hybrids won't reliably look like their parents.

■ Select stems with dry, brown papery pods. Use a container to catch the seeds as you open the pods with your fingers.
■ Pick out debris before pouring the seed into the envelope. Keep the envelope in a seed tin away from heat sources.
■ Label the envelope with the variety name and date. Note the plant's performance for the next time you come to sow it.

What to do now... in your flower patch

Top tip

Look out for pots of hardy flowering cyclamen in garden centres that you can use now to brighten your garden with some instant colour

Plant up a pot for late colour

September is a great month for grasses. Cascading pennisetums add character to pot displays, sending up attractive bottlebrush plumes. Echinaceas are the mainstay of any prairie planting scheme. They make the perfect naturalistic companion to grasses and sedges, and can be planted out in a sunny spot after the flowers fade. Around the base of these plants, the arching habit of evergreen *Carex testacea* softens the edges of a pot and adds rustic charm.

Other tasks to do...

- **Dig up, pot on and bring tender perennials indoors**
- **Trim spent perennials and compost the growth if it's disease-free**
- **Support asters to keep them upright as they grow**
- **Prepare containers for spring bulb displays, emptying old plants and cleaning them**

Plant dwarf iris in pots

Add dwarf iris (*Iris reticulata*) bulbs around the edges of winter and spring-flowering pots. Forms of *Iris reticulata* come in shades from pale to dark blue and have pretty markings on the petals. They flower at about 15cm high, so are best in a pot with plants that won't swamp them. Loosen the compost and make holes three times the depth of the bulbs. Put the bulbs point up into the holes, cover them and firm the surface. Water the pot and place it somewhere where you can easily enjoy the lovely scent of these pretty flowers early next spring.

Plant biennials

Plant biennials such as foxgloves and wallflowers now so that they are well established in the garden or in pots before they start flowering next spring. If potted plants are rootbound, pull roots apart at the base or use a knife if it's tough. Give them a good soak before planting. Self-sown biennials in the borders can be moved this month, so they are in a preferred position.

What to do now... growing your own

Top tip

Sow green manure into empty veg beds – this covering will add nutrients to the soil, help protect the soil over winter and deter weed growth

Care for radish crops

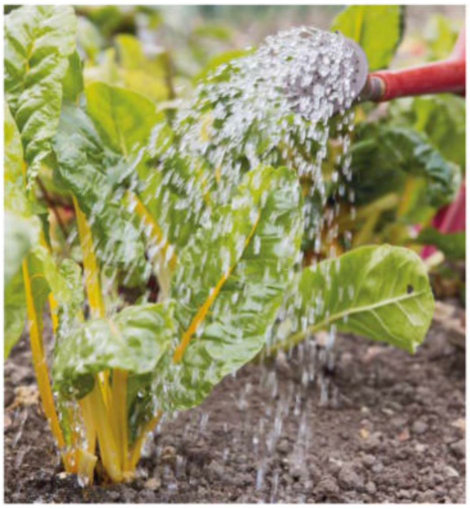
Thin radishes and soak the soil around them to keep them swelling and stop them from bolting, which they are prone to do as night temperatures start to drop. Use one hand to hold the soil down around the plant that you want to keep and use the other hand to gently remove those that need to go. You only need to leave about 1cm between plants to get a decent-sized breakfast radish. If you've sown large, slower-growing winter varieties they'll need 5cm between plants.

Harvest beetroot

Pick some beetroot along the rows to cook or grate into salads. At this time of year the young, later-sown beets are still sweet but there is plenty of time for some to grow into larger, more earthy beets, so try harvesting every other one along the row so that those left behind are evenly spaced and can grow bigger to fill the gap before you pull them up to store over winter. Make sure the row is well watered to settle the plants back in after the disturbance.

Water chard

Keep watering chard and spinach to stop it bolting. Thoroughly soak the ground around the plants. Check regularly and don't let them dry out. Giving extra water should get them through this period when lower night temperatures can trigger flowering. If you see signs of the central stem running up to flower, snip it out and water again. It will promote more leafy growth that will last well into the winter.



Check pears for ripeness

Test apples and pears to see if they are ripe. Look up the variety to check when fruit is supposed to be ripe, or just pick one and taste it. If there are windfall fruits on the ground, it's a good sign they're ready to pick. If ready, hold the fruit at the base and twist. The stalk should naturally snap from the tree.

Other tasks to do...

- Protect brassicas from pigeons with netting
- Plant spring cabbages
- Cut out the old canes of blackberries after fruiting
- Keep harvesting runner beans and freeze gluts
- Store ripe apples carefully

Crop of the month

Aubergines

Sow Jan-Apr
Harvest Jul-Sep

Aubergines can be grown in a greenhouse or a sheltered, sunny spot outdoors. Sown indoors, the young plants can be moved outside in late May or early June once the danger of frost is over. The fruits are delicious, roasted, fried or grilled, and make a versatile ingredient for dishes such as curries or ratatouille. Aubergines are high in antioxidants such as nasunin, because of the purple skins of the fruits, as well as a good source of fibre.

HARVESTING

Aubergines need a long growing season and should be ready to start harvesting between July and September, depending on when the seed was sown, and how warm the summer has been. They are ripe when they are firm, plump and glossy. Once fruits start to lose their shine and turn dull, they also become bitter, so pick them at their peak. They are best picked fresh and used for cooking immediately.

OUR CHOICES

'Moneymaker', 'Black Beauty' or 'Ophelia'

Sri Lankan style pickled aubergines and peppers

A lovely, unusual dish. Serve with rice or flatbreads and yogurt.
SERVES 4

- 5 baby aubergines, halved and scored
- 2 pointy peppers, roughly chopped
- 1 red onion, sliced
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp sea salt
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 100ml cider or white wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp mustard seeds
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp sugar
- ½ tsp sea salt flakes

1. Preheat oven to 200°C/180°C fan. Mix the aubergines, peppers and onion with turmeric, salt and olive oil in a roasting tin, then roast in the oven for 30 minutes, until aubergines are cooked through.
2. Meanwhile, mix the vinegar, mustard seeds, red chilli, garlic, sugar and the ½ teaspoon of sea salt flakes, then set aside.
3. Pour the mixture over the roasted aubergines and peppers, and return to the oven for a further five minutes.
4. Serve hot, with rice and yogurt alongside.

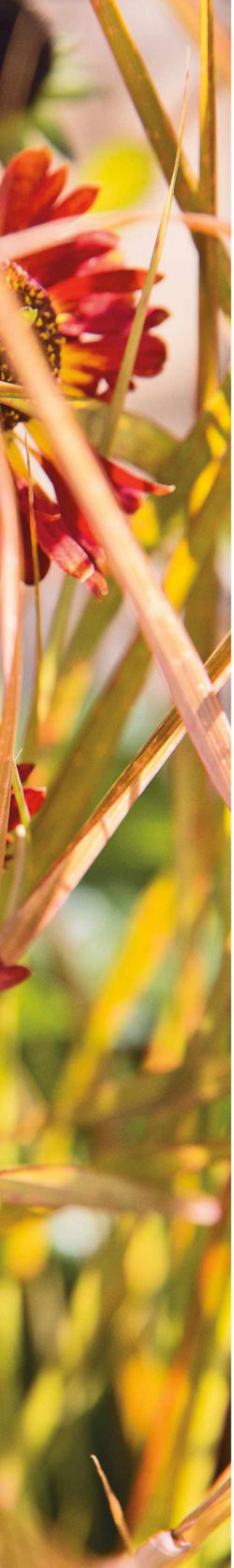
WHY NOT TRY...
Use slices of aubergine in aubergine parmigiana or try making a dip such as baba ganoush

October

October is a time to tidy up but also to look forward by planting pots of bulbs and ordering bare-root fruit trees. Urgent garden tasks are tailing off, but this means there's time to enjoy the jobs there are – gathering leaves, tidying the greenhouse or emptying summer containers. And there are still harvests to enjoy, with pumpkins and squash at their best this month

Key task

Leave some heleniums to form seedheads after they have finished flowering, to provide food for birds through the winter



This month's round up...

While working in borders this month, you may spot peacock butterflies and queen wasps on the wing. Also look out for the red admiral butterfly – it normally migrates to the continent, but increasing numbers are staying here.

Prune

- Blackberries and hybrid berries
- Blackcurrants (young plants)
- Cotton lavender (santolina)
- Lavatera – to tidy up uneven growth
- Rosemary
- Roses – to avoid windrock

Sow

Indoors

- Hollyhocks
- Oriental poppies
- Sweet peas

Outdoors

- Green manure
- Hardy broad beans
- Hardy peas

Plant

- Autumn bedding
- Conifer hedges
- Containerised roses
- Garlic cloves
- Onion sets
- Spring cabbages

Harvest

- Autumn cabbages
- Beetroot
- Carrots
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Perpetual spinach

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This month's
Star plants

1 *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*
A new name for asters, these cheerful flowers are a must have for autumn colour. They are also vital for pollinators, providing late season nectar. 'Lady in Blue' is a compact variety, good for containers, with double blue flowers.
Flowers Aug-Nov
Height x Spread 30cm x 30cm

2 Shrubby salvias
These salvias are long-flowering, with a wide range of colours, and pollinators love them. They're at their best in front of a west- or south-facing wall, but will grow well in warm, open gardens if sheltered from strong winds. 'Cerro Potosi' has vivid-magenta flowers set against dark-green foliage. Good in pots.
F May-Oct **H x S** 90cm x 75cm

3 Pheasant's tail grass
Anemanthele lessoniana provides structure and movement throughout the year, but this grass comes into its own through autumn and winter, with foliage showing shades of yellow, orange and red autumn colour.
F Jun-Sep **H x S** 1m x 1m

4 *Tithonia rotundifolia*
The colour of high summer is still hanging on in there. This is the sort of joyful orange that cannot help but liven up an autumn border. It goes brilliantly with all the developing seedheads and the tall grasses that are just coming into their glory now. It's well worth sowing a few seeds of this annual in spring.
F Jul-Oct **H x S** 1.8m x 50cm

5 Berberis
Berberis make good hedges as well as border shrubs and their autumn colour is very striking. They are also tough and seem to grow in any soil. There are lots of different varieties, from green to purple. 'Cheal's Scarlet' has leaves that are red-purple turning bright red, in the autumn, as well as vibrant red berries.
F Mar-May **H x S** 1.5m x 1.5m

5

What to do now...

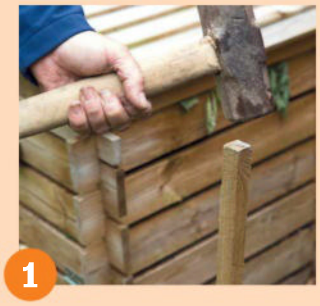
around the garden

10 min task

Repot amaryllis if pot bound, into a pot 2cm wider than the bulb on all sides, with two-thirds of the bulb above the surface

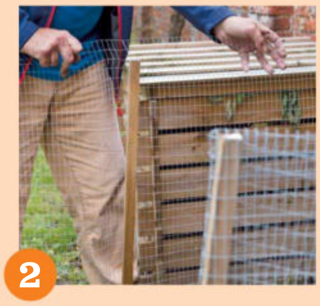
Make leafmould

Make some valuable free soil improver by stacking fallen leaves in a wire-lined frame. Fungal activity slowly rots the leaves down to a friable compost. The result is the best conditioner, adding humus to the soil, or it can be sieved and used in homemade potting compost.



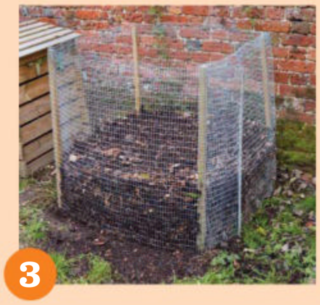
1

Drive four stakes deep into the ground in a formation that will support wire netting and hold the leaves as they rot down.



2

Put the wire netting around the outside of the frame. Tie it using strong twine to each stake, one at a time, and pull taut.

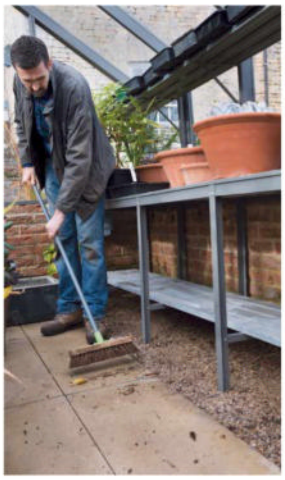


3

Fill with leaves, pressing down to fit more in. It can take two years to rot right down and a year to make a great mulch.

Plant hellebores

Hellebores planted in a shady border will add strong texture all year and reliable flowers for late winter colour. Some modern hellebores can grow well in sun too but they're really valuable used in shade. Leave the pots to soak in a bucket of water while you dig a hole, then mix plenty of garden compost to the base of the hole before planting them.



Tidy the greenhouse

Give your greenhouse a clean and tidy, ready for the coming winter. Sweep up any spilled compost and plant debris that could otherwise harbour insect pests and fungal diseases, which thrive in low light conditions. Get a bucket of soapy water and a cloth to wipe down the framework, staging, benches, and containers.

Other tasks to do...

- **Paint sheds and fences if the weather is mild**
- **Bring exotics indoors**
- **Plant bulbs in the lawn**
- **Transplant shrubs that are in the wrong place**
- **Spread a 5cm mulch over bare areas in borders to keep weeds down**
- **Prune tall shrubs to prevent windrock**

What to do now... in your flower patch

Harvest the last cut flowers

It's time to gather the last of the cut flowers. Early morning is the best time to cut. Use secateurs and cut low down to get a long stem. Put all the stems into a tall bucket full of water for a few hours, to take up as much moisture as possible and lengthen vase life. Strip the lower leaves off before trimming the end and putting in a vase.

Sow a patch of wildflowers

It's easy to turn even the smallest bit of bare ground into a wildflower patch. Now is a good time to sow, while the soil still has some warmth. Scatter the seeds evenly on to weed free soil, water with a fine spray and cover with netting until seedlings appear.

10 min task

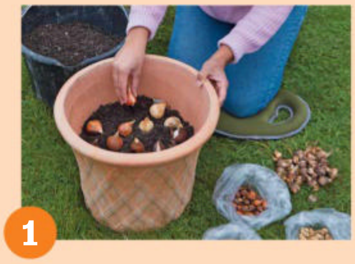
Cover alpines with an open-ended cloche to protect them from rain and falling leaves, which could lead to the plants rotting

Other tasks to do...

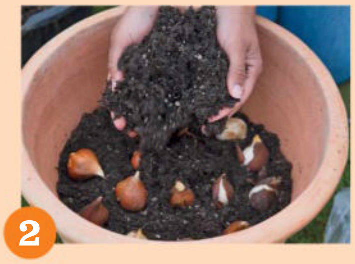
- **Trim edging plants that have spilled over paths**
- **Pot on summer cuttings to plant next year**
- **Sow next year's sweet peas in a cold frame**

Plant a layered pot of bulbs

Planting bulbs in layers gives extra flower power and a longer display. Put the bulbs that flower latest at the bottom and the earliest at the top. The shoots will easily navigate past each other. Choose a large, deep pot with good drainage holes.



1 Pour peat-free compost into a deep pot and arrange the first layer of bulbs on top. Tulips are perfect – they flower later and are happy planted nice and deep.



2 Cover with a 10cm layer of compost, then the second layer of bulbs – choose an earlier flower, such as daffodils. Repeat with crocus bulbs if there's room.

3 Add the final layer of compost to just below the rim and firm gently. Place the pot in its final position, in a sheltered, sunny spot, and give it a good soak.

What to do now…

growing your own

Harvest pumpkins and squash

Cut pumpkins and winter squashes now they are fully developed and well ripened. When cutting, leave plenty of stalk intact on the fruits to help them keep well. Pick a dry, breezy day and leave them outside in a sunny spot if you can, to help harden skins. Store in a dry, airy room for winter.

Top dress blueberry plants

Tidy up blueberries now while they are an attractive autumn feature on the patio. Remove any weeds or tree seedlings from the base of the plant and scrape away the top 5cm of compost, along with any moss and debris. Add a fresh layer of ericaceous or soil-based lime-free compost to just below the rim of the pot. Check the compost isn't too dry by pushing your finger down into the old compost. Water the plant if necessary.

Top tip

Look out for orange pustules on leeks – this is a symptom of leek rust. Remove affected leaves before eating the leeks, and bin any infected foliage

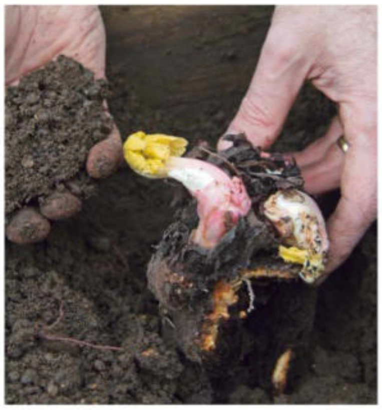
20 min task

Order bare-root trees and fruit bushes to plant between now and spring. Bare-root plants are cheaper to buy than pot-grown ones

Plant rhubarb

Find a patch at least a metre square to plant new rhubarb crowns. They're a great choice for the shadiest part of the veg plot. Fork in lots of organic matter to improve moisture retention, and add more to the planting hole. Let them settle in for at least a year before harvesting.

- Press with your fingers around the crown to check it's firm. Look for the shoot buds, which need to be pointing upwards.
- Position the crown in the hole so the uppermost part is exposed on the soil surface, then firm in place and water well.



Other tasks to do…

- **Cover salads with cloches to keep them growing**
- **Divide large clumps of herbs such as lemon balm and marjoram**
- **Leave some bean pods to ripen, so you can collect the seeds in a few weeks' time**
- **Spread a 5cm thick layer of well-rotted compost over bare areas in veg beds**

Crop of the month

Winter squash

Sow Apr-May
Harvest Oct-Nov

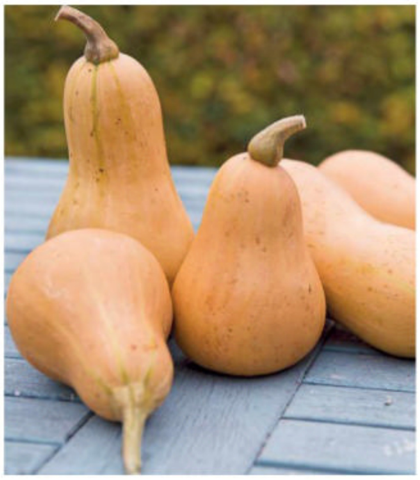
Squash can be eaten steamed, added to casseroles, roasted with fresh herbs or lightly fried to form the base for a mouth-watering soup. It's high in fibre and beta carotene, which is good for eye health. If your garden is north of the Midlands or in a cold spot, it's worth choosing an early-cropping variety so the fruits have time to ripen properly before the first frosts. Winter squash are hungry crops, but they're not difficult to grow, and in all but very cold summers they are seriously rewarding.

HARVESTING

Raise the fruits off the ground on to a brick or tile. Allow the skins to harden in the sun so the fruits will store better. This helps them to ripen properly and keeps them clear of wet soil and slugs. Harvest when the colour of the fruits has fully developed and they have a hollow ring when tapped. Store in a cool room, with squashes not touching each other. If stored properly, squash will keep right through to spring.

OUR CHOICES

'Hawk', 'Hunter', 'Harrier', 'Crown Prince', 'Uchiki Kuri'



Baked gnocchi with goat's cheese and roasted squash

This is a wonderful rib-sticker of a dish. Perfect for a crowd and just as good warmed through the day after. SERVES 4-6

- 1kg squash, peeled, deseeded and cut into 1.5cm cubes
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 tspn chilli flakes
- 1 tspn sea salt flakes
- 16 tablespoons olive oil
- 1kg potato gnocchi

FOR THE TOPPING

- 500ml crème fraîche
- 1 tspn sea salt flakes
- 125g log goat's cheese, sliced
- Handful panko breadcrumbs
- 50g pine nuts
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Greek basil leaves to serve

1 Preheat oven to 200°C/ 180°C fan. Tip the squash, rosemary, chilli, sea salt and olive oil into a roasting tin. Mix, then bake for 25 minutes, till just softening.

2 Put the gnocchi in a bowl and pour over boiling water. Leave for two minutes, then drain the water well.

3 For the topping, remove the tin of roasted squash from the oven and stir through the gnocchi, crème fraîche and sea salt.

4 Scatter over the goat's cheese, breadcrumbs, pine nuts and some freshly ground black pepper. Drizzle with a little olive oil, if you wish, then transfer to the oven to bake for 30 minutes, until golden brown and crisp.

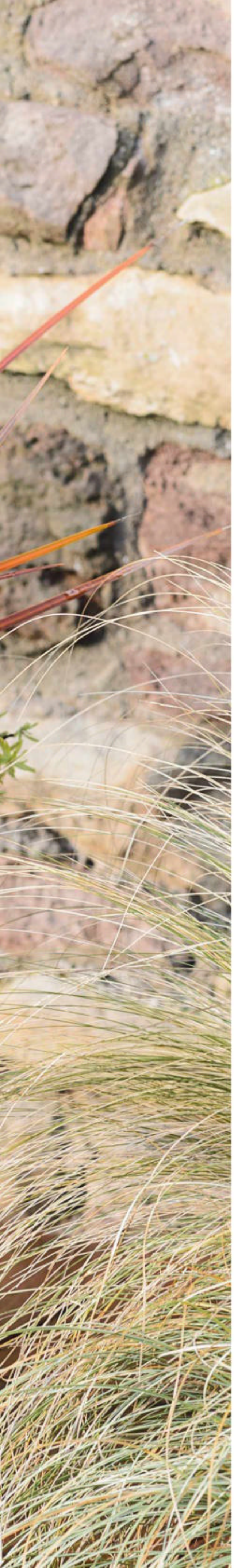
WHY NOT TRY...
Add squash to risotto, vegetable tray bake or make a warming soup

Key task

Choose some permanent plants, such as a dwarf pine, for pots to cheer up your patio through winter, then add seasonal bedding to ring the changes

November

It's tulip planting month and a chance to get out into the garden and enjoy the autumn colour. As well as planting bulbs, there are harvests in the veg patch from late salads and the first parsnips, and plenty of other jobs to keep you warm, including pruning cornus and taking cuttings



This month's round up...

Look out for young foxes as you're planting bulbs this autumn. They don't hibernate and will be exploring and foraging for food. Late butterflies and other insects will enjoy any windfallen fruit left on the ground.

Prune

- Autumn-fruiting raspberries
- Bare-root roses (before planting)
- Climbing roses
- Deciduous trees and shrubs (except cherries and plums)
- Fruit bushes
- Grapevines

Sow

- Cyclamen – for blooms next winter
- Hardy peas
- Salad leaves – on a well-lit windowsill
- Sprouting seeds – indoors

Plant

- Bare-root fruit bushes, hedging, roses, trees and shrubs
- Garlic
- Hellebores
- Indoor hyacinths
- Tulip bulbs
- Winter-flowering heathers
- Winter pansies

Harvest

- Brussels sprouts
- Cabbages
- Carrots
- Cauliflowers
- Jerusalem artichokes
- Kale
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Spinach
- Swiss chard

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S **29**
S **30** ST ANDREW'S DAY BANK HOLIDAY SCOTLAND

This month's
Star plants

1 Boston ivy

This climber is vigorous and does need to be controlled to stop it spreading into gutters but it's beautiful at this time of year when temperatures drop and the leaves turn every colour from claret to crimson. *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* has three lobes to each leaf, not to be confused with Virginia creeper (*P. quinquefolia*) which has five lobes.
Height x Spread 20m x 10m

2 Miscanthus

These tall, elegant grasses reach their peak at this time of year, with silky plumes swaying above a fountain of arching foliage that matures to various shades of soft yellow, beige and copper. 'Red Chief' has deep red plumes that fade to silver and last through winter.
Flowers Aug-Nov **H x S** 1.5m x 1m

3 *Abutilon* 'Orange Hot Lava'

This month the colour is slowly draining from our gardens. For a bit of late autumn zing, this abutilon will do the trick, with its bonfire-coloured flowers. The only snag is that it will only do this in the mildest of gardens. It needs a conservatory or glasshouse in most parts of the country, but could be grown in a pot and brought inside for winter.
F Jun-Nov **H x S** 1.5m x 70cm

4 *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* 'Dawn'

Clusters of scented pink flowers appear through winter even when leaves have fallen. Plant this shrub alongside a path or near the house where you can best enjoy the fragrance and winter colour.
F Nov-Mar **H x S** 3m x 2m

5 *Camellia sasanqua* 'Blanchette'

You may think of the camellia as a spring shrub. But there are also camellias that flower through the winter. Glossy and evergreen, they will carry you through the dark days of this season. Plant in slightly acidic soil in a sheltered position.
F Oct-Jan **H x S** 4m x 2m

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What to do now...

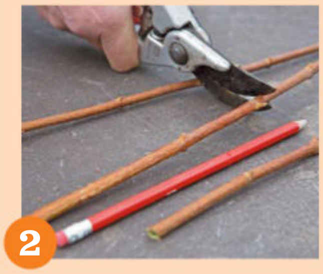
around the garden

Take hardwood cuttings

Make straight hardwood cuttings of shrubs such as deutzia (below), buddleia, cornus and weigela. They'll root slowly in a cold frame over winter, put on growth in spring and can be potted on or planted out to flower in the following year.

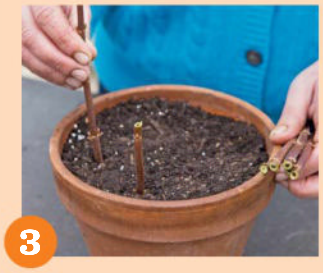
1

Select the thickest stems that have grown this year. Cut them close to ground level, using sharp secateurs to ensure that you make a clean cut.



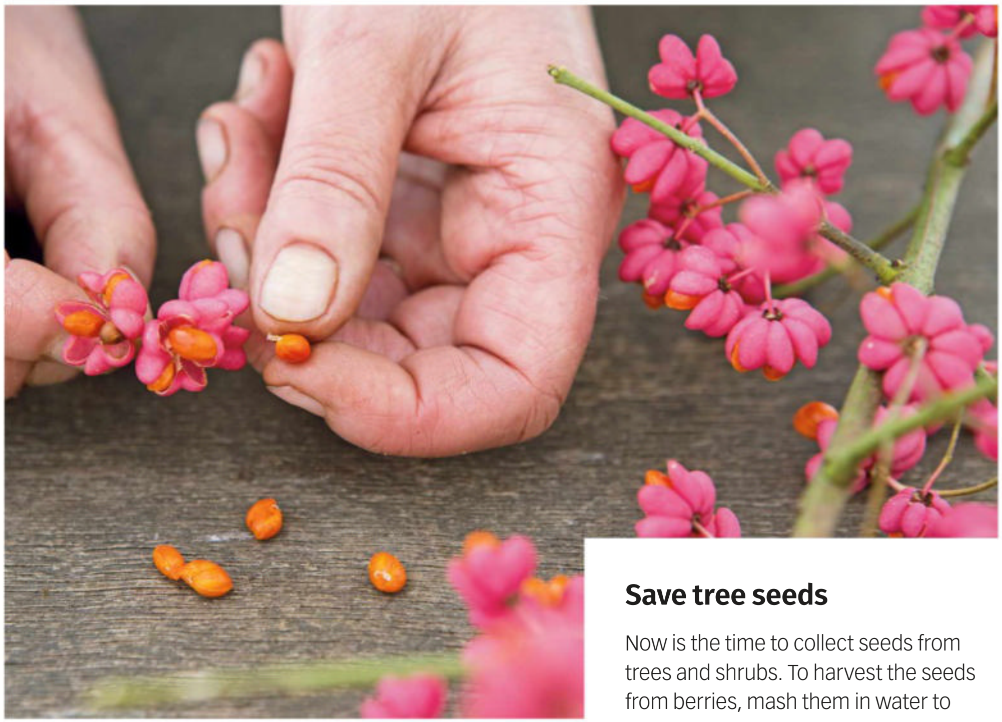
2

Cut pencil-thick stems 15-20cm long, making a slanted cut just above a bud at the top and a straight cut just below a bud at the bottom.



3

Fill a pot with gritty cuttings compost and firm it in just below the rim. Insert the cuttings by two thirds of their length, spaced around the edge. Water in.



Save tree seeds

Now is the time to collect seeds from trees and shrubs. To harvest the seeds from berries, mash them in water to remove the flesh, and let the seeds sink to the bottom. Then simply dry them off.

- Split open the ripe fruits. Wear gloves, or wash your hands thoroughly after handling, as all parts of this plant (spindle, above) are toxic.
- Pull off the seeds one by one. Discard damaged ones. Viable seeds feel firm.
- Pour clean sharp sand into a clear plastic bag and dampen it, then mix in the seeds. Spindle seeds need eight weeks at room temperature, then up to eight in a fridge. Then sow in loam-based compost topped with grit.

Prune cornus

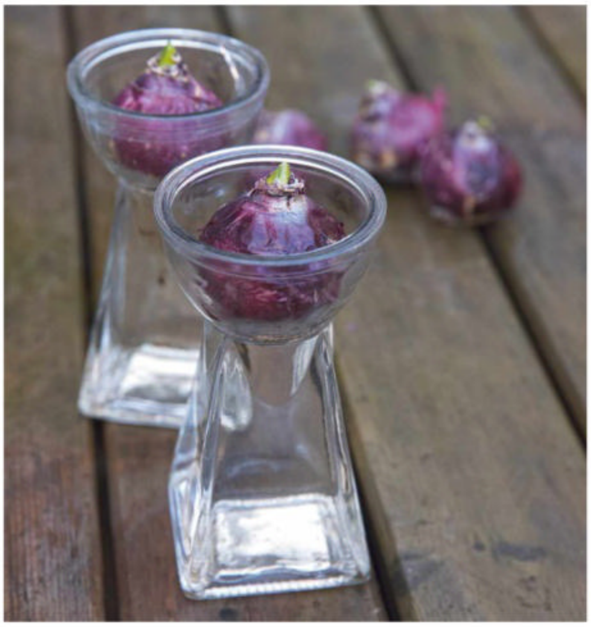
Help shrubs grown for their bright winter stem colour to look their best – and protect their overall health – by cutting out damaged, diseased or dead growth. Also stand back and see which, if any, pruning cuts would help to make the plant a more spectacular shape. The advantage of trimming now is that with the leaves gone you can see the overall shape well, and the plant will stay exactly as it is for the rest of the winter.

Other tasks to do...

- **Check tree ties and loosen them if they are becoming too tight**
- **Clean and sharpen shears before putting them away for winter**
- **Scoop out fallen leaves from ponds**
- **Move wormeries under cover for winter**
- **Mulch soil around trees and shrubs to give them a boost**

What to do now... in your flower patch

Grow hyacinths



Specially prepared hyacinth bulbs are available now, to plant immediately. These treated bulbs will flower in 10-12 weeks. You don't even need any compost. They are best grown in hyacinth vases, which are wider at the base than the top to help stop the plant toppling over as it grows.

Check the bulbs are firm and that there is no 'give' in them. Fill the vase with water up to the narrow part of the vase so that the bottom of the bulb sits just above the water.

Place the bulb on the top of the vase and take water out of the vase if the base of the bulb is touching the water. Keep your vase in a cool, dark place until it has filled with roots and flower stems are appearing. Then move to a warmer, well-lit place for flowering.

Plant bulbs in grass

Planting bulbs in grass is called 'naturalising'. Not all bulbs are suited to this, but many daffodils, crocuses and snowdrops are happy in such situations. Ensure bulbs do not go short of water when flowering, and apply general fertiliser in spring. Make sure bulbs are firm and healthy before planting.

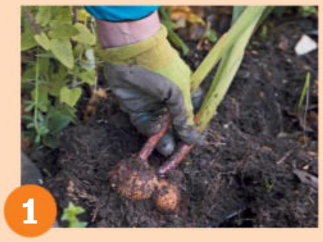
- A long-handled bulb planter makes holes quickly. Make sure each hole is the right depth for the bulb.
- Push each bulb in the bottom of the hole, making sure there is no air pocket beneath it.
- When the bulb is settled in the hole, replace the grass and firm it down.

Top tip

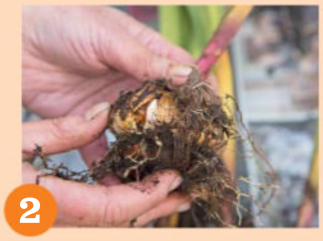
Put chicken wire over planted bulbs in containers to deter squirrels and mice from taking or eating the bulbs

Lift and store gladioli

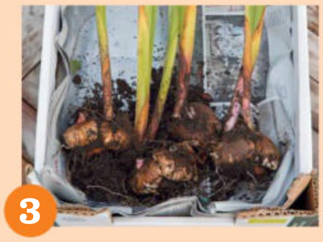
Lift gladioli corms to store somewhere frost-free for winter, particularly if you have soil that gets waterlogged. It also helps clumps of gladioli to stay vigorous if you lift and divide them, keeping the strongest to replant next year.



1 Loosen the soil around the edge of the gladioli. Pull the corms out when you see them near the surface and keep the foliage attached to the corm.



2 Inspect each corm, rubbing off any soil or debris and check them over thoroughly for rots or pests such as snails that may also be on the corm.



3 Lay them in a tray for foliage to die back and for corms to dry so they store well. Keep in a cool but frost-free place until spring.

Other tasks to do...

- Plant bare-root roses, trees and shrubs on dry days
- Lift dahlias in cold area and on heavy soil
- Clear away annual climbers and compost them

What to do now...

growing your own

Enjoy early parsnips

Start picking parsnips after you've had a frost, when they will be sweet and ready to eat. To dig them up, use a fork, inserting it a little way from the plants, parallel with the row. Lever up the parsnips and if they resist, go deeper so you get the whole root out without snapping it. The rest of the row can safely be left in the ground to keep you in parsnips through to spring.

Keep harvesting salad

Keep harvesting salad leaves such as cut-and-come-again lettuce, rocket, mustard and mizuna. Make sure you only harvest the outer leaves, to have plenty of salad for the kitchen in the weeks to come by. These plants will grow gently, growing from the centre to keep you supplied with more leaves. Protect them with fleece or cloches if you want to keep harvesting quality leaves right into the winter.

Top tip

Don't pick Brussels sprouts until after the first frosts for the best flavour – a period of cold will make the sprouts taste sweeter

Put cloches over herbs

Cover herbs such as parsley, coriander and chervil with a cloche to keep them fresh. Both flat-leaved and curled parsley will survive the winter without cover, but the leaf quality will be much better under protection, and the others will last for longer. Peg the cloche down to stop it being blown away and leave the vent at the top open to encourage air flow, so the plant doesn't rot. When you take the cloche off to harvest, remove any fading foliage, too.

Other tasks to do...

- **Harvest the last apples**
- **Place cloches over hardy peas and broad beans during cold or wet spells**
- **Clear out old tomato and cucumber plants from the greenhouse**
- **Check stored potatoes and remove any that are rotten**

Crop of the month

Cauliflower

Sow Feb-May, Oct-Dec
Harvest May-Mar

Cauliflower heads, or curds, are actually immature flowers. Most are white or cream, but there are also purple or orange varieties. Plants need lots of space, unless you grow 'mini' types. Romanesco types are actually a broccoli that looks like a cauliflower, with spiralling white or green florets. Caulis are a good source of vitamins C, K and B complex, and minerals including potassium, and are low in calories.

HARVESTING

Cut the stem using a sharp knife once the curd is sufficiently large and still firm, and before it develops individual florets. In summer, fold outer leaves over developing curds to protect them from hot sun. Use caulis fresh or break into pieces after harvesting, blanch and freeze. Sow batches every few weeks for a continuous supply, choosing varieties to match the season.

OUR CHOICES

'All The Year Round', 'Igloo', 'Graffiti'

Winter panzanella

Panzanella is very useful for using up leftovers and makes the most of stale bread. It makes a delicious side dish… SERVES 4 AS SIDE DISH

- 1 cauliflower, broken into florets
- 100ml extra virgin olive oil
- 250g good bread, such as sourdough or ciabatta
- 2 red chillies, halved, deseeded and finely chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, finely sliced
- 8 anchovies, finely chopped
- 35g raisins, soaked in just-boiled water and drained
- 1 tbsp capers, rinsed of salt or brine
- 4 tbsp roughly chopped flat leaf parsley
- 5 radishes (preferably French breakfast radishes), finely sliced
- 1 tsp white balsamic vinegar or white wine vinegar
- juice of ½-1 lemon

1. Steam the cauliflower until it's just tender (be careful not to overcook it), then set aside.
2. Tear the bread into small chunks and heat three tbsp of the olive oil in a large frying pan. Fry the bread over a medium heat in batches until it's golden all over – each batch will take four or five minutes to get a good colour. Put all the bread back into the pan and add chilli, garlic and anchovies to the pan (with another tablespoon of oil if necessary) and sauté for a further two minutes, making sure the garlic is golden not dark. Tip the bread mixture into a broad, shallow serving bowl and add the raisins, capers and parsley.
3. Add the rest of the olive oil to the pan and, on high heat, fry the cauliflower until tinged with gold. Put the cauliflower in the bowl with the bread, add the radishes, balsamic vinegar and the juice of half a lemon and toss it all together. Season, but don't add too much salt because of the anchovies. Taste and add more lemon juice or olive oil. Serve warm.

WHY NOT TRY…
Roasted cauliflower in curry, a cauliflower steak or battered, spicy florets in a stir fry

December

Crisp cold days are perfect for winter garden tasks such as planting a hedge or gathering colourful berried stems to create festive decorations. At this time of year, there's no rush – there's time to prune and reshape apple trees, lay compost on veg beds and plan for next year

Key task

Use healthy foliage of ivy, holly and skimmia to make decorations and add a festive flair to your house with wreaths and table centrepieces

This month's round up...

Most wildlife is hibernating this month but you may see waxwings, which have a distinctive crest. They eat berries and fallen fruits. It's a good time to review your garden to see what else could be added to attract wildlife next year.

Prune

- Apples and pears
- Autumn-fruiting raspberries
- Blackcurrants
- Climbing roses
- Deciduous trees
- Gooseberries
- Greenhouse grapevines
- Wisterias

Sow

Indoors

- Corn salad (lamb's lettuce)
- Mustard greens

Outdoors (under cloches)

- Hardy broad beans

Plant

- Amaryllis (hippeastrum) bulbs – indoors
- Bare-root roses
- Deciduous shrubs and trees
- Evergreen shrubs in containers
- Tulips
- Winter bedding

Harvest

- Brussels sprouts
- Celeriac
- Celery
- Kale
- Leeks
- Parsnips
- Perpetual spinach
- Swiss chard
- Turnips
- Winter cabbages

M **1** BANK HOLIDAY SCOTLAND
T **2**
W **3**
T **4**
F **5**
S **6**
S **7**
M **8**
T **9**
W **10**
T **11**
F **12**
S **13**
S **14**
M **15**
T **16**
W **17**
T **18**
F **19**
S **20**
S **21**
M **22**
T **23**
W **24**
T **25** CHRISTMAS DAY BANK HOLIDAY UK
F **26** BOXING DAY BANK HOLIDAY UK
S **27**
S **28**
M **29**
T **30**
W **31**

1

2

3

4

5

This month's
Star plants

1 Sorbus 'Eastern Promise'
You cannot fail to love a rowan: a froth of white flowers in spring, fabulous colour in autumn and glorious berries. And it's not just about you – a fortune can be saved in birdseed if you have a sorbus in your garden because the berries are highly nutritious. This tree will suit most garden sizes and it's tolerant of pollution.
Flowers Apr-May
Height x Spread 6m x 4m

2 *Ilex aquifolium* 'Silver Milkmaid'
Holly is a useful, architectural evergreen shrub that grows well in most gardens. Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without it. There are many variegated types, such as 'Silver Milkmaid' which can brighten gloomy borders. A large holly is easily pruned into a more manageable size.
F May-Jun **H x S** 6m x 4m

3 *Hedera helix* 'Glacier'
Useful for brightening shady areas, evergreen ivy foliage features a vast variety of patterns that mingle and overlay each other in dark to pale green, silver and grey, white, cream and yellow, and everything in between. 'Glacier' has neat, pointed foliage mottled in green, silvery-green and white.
F Sep-Oct **H x S** 2m x 2m

4 *Cornus sanguinea* 'Anny's Winter Orange'
On sunny days in December, the light will hit a patch of dogwood and the pinky-orange young stems will transform your border. This is one of the most reliablw varieties. Take hardwood cuttings in autumn to increase your stock.
F May-Jun **H x S** 2.5m x 2.5m

5 Hippeastrum 'Naranja'
December wouldn't be December without anxiety of wondering whether your hippeastrum is going to flower in time for Christmas . If it doesn't, at least it will cheer up the new year! Grow from a large bulb in gritty, free-draining compost. Avoid watering from above.
F Dec-Apr **H x S** 60cm x 30cm

What to do now...

around the garden

Collect stems for Christmas

Make natural seasonal decorations for free by gathering your own greenery from the garden. Cut any berried stems before they get stripped by the birds. Prepare cut stems by putting them straight into a bucket of water kept at room temperature for a couple of hours, then cut them all again and crush the ends before giving them another soak in fresh water. If you plan to keep them for a longer period, plunge the stems into a jam jar of one part glycerine to two parts hot water and leave for two weeks. This will help keep them fresh for longer.

What to collect

- Cotoneaster branches
- Myrtle with black berries
- Dogwood
- Pyracantha (look out for thorns)
- Holly with berries or variegated leaves
- Ivy with berries

Top tip

Insulate outdoor taps and pipes with bubblewrap or insulation tubes. Drain the pipes too if possible, so they don't freeze and split

Plant a beech hedge

Buy bundles of cheap bareroot beech whips for planting now. These fresh, young plants dug up from the field are only available around this time. Soak the roots, then water after planting. Prune the roots by about a third to encourage more growth. Use a spade to dig a trench and rock it forward to make a V-shaped gap. Line plants along the trench at 45cm intervals and tread the soil back along the row.

Compost twigs

Collect and chop up twigs that have snapped and fallen from trees and shrubs during autumn. Cut them into 4-5cm pieces so they are small enough to go in at the bottom of the compost heap, where they'll create air gaps to help keep bacteria active. This allows the twigs to rot more quickly. Or bundle them up and poke into the hedge to provide cover for hibernating bugs.

Other tasks to do...

- Float a ball on the pond to stop it freezing and keep it accessible to wildlife
- Clean oil and sharpen all cutting tools, first taking them apart if necessary
- Before bringing in the Christmas tree, saw 3cm off the trunk and give it a soak

What to do now... in your flower patch

Place forced bulbs on show

As they start the process of budding up, place forced bulbs into their final position to enjoy the festive display and make maximum advantage of scented flowers. A table in a well-lit dining area is a good choice.

Choose a cool, bright spot and avoid placing them near radiators, woodburners or fires because the flowers are likely to go over quickly in very warm rooms with dry air. Have thin green canes and clips ready for supporting any stems that start to flop over as the flowers develop.

Top tip

Position any shrubs with scented winter flowers near to a path or entrance, where the fragrance can be enjoyed before spring arrives

10 min task

Add a thick layer of dry mulch around agapanthus plants to protect them from winter frosts

Cut back violas

Give pot-grown violas that have now gone over a new lease of life by cutting spent flower stems and any tatty growth back to strong, healthy leaves. Several shoots will regrow from the base, creating a more compact shape than before. Plants will flower again and give colour through the rest of winter. Look out for seedlings around the base of the pot in spring where the original flowers drooped over the side of the pot and dropped their seed.

Trim and store pelargoniums

Get free summer colour for next year's container displays by storing your pelargoniums through winter. Use a trowel to lift them out, or alternatively just tip out the container on a tarpaulin, then cut back all the soft foliage and flowers, leaving a cluster of stems about 10cm high. Trim straggly roots lightly then plunge the roots into pots or crates of loose compost and do not water. Keep them somewhere dry and frost-free.

Other tasks to do...

- **Design and plan new borders and planting schemes, then order the plants for spring**
- **Cut back tall perennials that have flopped over**
- **Sort out flower seeds into sowing time order to get ready for next year**
- **Mulch between perennials when the soil is damp but not waterlogged**
- **Take root cuttings of phlox, verbascums and perennial poppies**

What to do now... growing your own

Prune overgrown apple trees

Prune overgrown apple trees now that they are dormant. If major reduction is needed, do it in stages over two or three years to avoid the tree trying to compensate by putting on a mass of twiggy regrowth next season. If the canopy spread needs to be headed back it still adds up to a large percentage of the overall wood, so judge how much to prune and keep it to under a third. Remove damaged and crossing branches first, then start shaping the frame.

1 Snap off the young watershoots that appear on mature wood. Cut them out completely so they don't reshoot again in spring.

2 Start pruning the side branches reducing the main length before the final cut. Do this in stages so the cut doesn't split when the branch pulls down.

3 Make a neat final cut flush to the main stem. Avoid leaving snags by holding the stub firmly to keep the tension against the blade as you saw.

Cover veg beds with compost

Warm yourself up by spreading homemade compost on your veg beds. Fork a deep layer onto the bare soil and between any winter crops. There's no need to dig it in, as it will be worked on by bugs and worms, who will draw it into the soil. This will improve the soil's structure and add a small amount of nutrients.

Remove larger figs

The small hard figs that didn't have time to ripen by the end of summer should be removed from fig trees to avoid them getting frosted and rotting. Snap off just the larger figs lower down on the stems. Leave the tiny figs forming at the nodes above these on the newest growth and at the tips, as they'll be next summer's crop.

Other tasks to do...

- **Sow mustard and cress seeds indoors**
- **Grow sprouting seeds on a sunny windowsill**
- **Order next year's seed potatoes**
- **Harvest Brussels sprouts, celeriac, winter cabbages and winter cauliflowers**
- **Inspect stored veg**

Crop of the month

Sprouts

Sow Mar-May
Harvest Aug-Mar

Brussels sprouts get their name because they were orginally grown in gardens near to the Belgian capital. Despite having a reputation as an unpopular vegetable, apparently, Britons eat more Brussels sprouts than any other nation in Europe.

Brussels sprouts are a great source of folic acid, vitamins B2, A and K, and minerals. They're also a rich source of cancer-preventing chemicals, and are particularly helpful at protecting against colon cancer.

HARVEST

Pick from late summer to late-winter when those at the base are walnut shaped, tightly closed and about 2-3cm in diameter. Start at the bottom of the stem and work upwards. Snap them off or use a knife, cutting in a downward motion. Remove 'blown' sprouts and any diseased leaves as you go. Store for up to three days in a polythene bag in the fridge. To freeze, blanch for three minutes, then cool and drain before freesing them.

OUR CHOICES

'Brendan', 'Brodie', 'Brilliant', 'Igor'

Cheesy sprout gratin

Sprouts should not just be for Christmas. Harvests are at their best for a long period over winter, so try them in a new way, baked in a gratin. SERVES 8-10

- 600g Brussels sprouts, trimmed (halved if large)
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 50g unsalted butter
- 2 banana shallots, finely chopped
- 50g plain flour
- 750ml milk
- 100ml double cream
- 1 tbsp English mustard
- 150g mature vegetarian cheddar, grated
- 40g dried breadcrumbs (panko work well)
- 2 thyme sprigs, leaves picked
- 60g blanched hazelnuts, roughly chopped

1. Bring a large pan of lightly salted water to the boil. Tip in the sprouts and cook for three minutes, then drain and set aside to steam-dry.
2. Heat the oil and butter in a saucepan until the butter is foaming, add the shallots and cook over a low heat for seven minutes or until softened. Stir in the flour and cook for two minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in the milk gradually, continuously whisking until you get a smooth sauce. Return to the heat and simmer for two minutes, whisking all the time. Whisk in the cream, mustard and cheddar. Season. Heat the oven to 220C/200C fan/gas 7.
3. Toss together dried breadcrumbs, thyme and hazelnuts. Tip the sprouts into a 30 x 20cm ovenproof dish and pour over the sauce. Top with the breadcrumbs. It will keep in the fridge for up to 24 hrs. Bake in the centre of the oven for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.

WHY NOT TRY...
Sprout slaw as a tasty side dish or thinly sliced, fried sprouts and leeks in a pasta sauce

Sowing calendar

All you need to know for when to sow and harvest for perfect results

🟩 **Sow indoors** 🟨 **Sow outdoors** 🟧 **Plant out** 🟪 **Flowers**

ORNAMENTALS		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Achillea Surface sow and cover with vermiculite		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Amaranthus Surface sow and cover with a thin layer of perlite		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟨🟧	🟨🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Ammi majus Best sown direct, 1mm deep		🟩	🟩🟨🟧	🟨🟧	🟨🟧			🟩	🟩🟨	🟨		
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Angelica gigas Surface sow, cover lightly with vermiculite. Flowers following year			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧						
									🟪	🟪			
	Aquilegia Surface sow - seeds need light to germinate. Flowers next year			🟩	🟩🟨	🟩🟨🟧	🟩🟨🟧	🟧					
					🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪					
	Astrantia Surface sow under glass and cover with grit		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Begonias Surface sow and don't cover. Use a lid or polythene	🟩	🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Black-eyed Susan Sow in trays and cover with vermiculite			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧					
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Briza maxima Broadcast sow or thinly, 6mm deep in drills			🟨	🟨	🟨🟧			🟨	🟨			
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Calendula Sow 1cm deep and thin seedlings to 10-15cm apart					🟨							
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Campanula lactiflora Surface sow and cover the seed to their own depth	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟨🟧	🟨						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Canary creeper Sow in pots or 1.5cm deep outdoors			🟩	🟩	🟩🟨🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	***Cerinthe major* 'Purpurascens'** Sow in pots or thinly, 5mm deep in drills			🟩	🟩🟨	🟨🟧	🟨🟧						
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Chrysanthemum carinatum Sow 6mm deep and thin to 25cm apart				🟨	🟨							
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Cleome Surface sow into modules and cover with 5mm of sieved compost		🟩	🟩		🟧							
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Cobaea scandens Soak seed and sow in pots on their side			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Coreopsis Surface sow in trays and cover with vermiculite		🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Cornflowers Sow in trays and cover with compost			🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧			🟩	🟩			
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			

	ORNAMENTALS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Cosmos Surface sow in trays and cover with 0.3mm of sieved compost			🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Dahlias Sow in trays, cover with 0.5mm sieved compost and use a propagator lid		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Echinacea Sow in trays and cover lightly or direct 6mm deep		🟩	🟩	🟨	🟨 🟧	🟧	🟧					
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Eryngium Surface sow, cover lightly with 0.3mm grit and use a propagator lid	🟩	🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Foxgloves Sow thinly in trays without covering seed. Overwinter in cold frames			🟧	🟩 🟧	🟩 🟧	🟩 🟧	🟩					
						🟪	🟪	🟪					
	Gypsophila Sow direct in containers or borders, 0.6mm deep				🟨								
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Hollyhocks Sow in trays and cover lightly with compost. Space 1.5cm apart outdoors in drills				🟩	🟩 🟨	🟨	🟧	🟧	🟧			
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Impatiens Surface sow, uncovered and use a propagator lid		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Laurentia Surface sow in trays, uncovered. Keep in a propagator or in a warm place	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧			🟩	🟩		
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Larkspur Sow in raked soil, 1.2cm deep			🟩	🟩	🟩 🟧	🟧			🟩			
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Lavender Surface sow in trays and cover with 1cm of grit or outdoors 3mm deep		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟨 🟧	🟨 🟧	🟨 🟧					
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Limnanthes douglasii Sow in trays and lightly cover or sow direct into drills 3mm deep		🟩	🟩	🟨 🟧	🟨 🟧	🟧						
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Lunaria annua Sow direct 6mm deep for flowers the following year							🟨		🟧	🟧		
					🟪	🟪							
	Lupin Sow 1cm deep in a tray. May need scarification and soaking		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩 🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧				
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Monarda Sow in trays and cover lightly with compost or direct where they are to flower			🟩	🟩	🟩 🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟨	🟨		
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Morning glory Soak seeds and sow 1cm deep. Place in 20-25°C heat			🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Nasturtium Sow in pots or direct where they are to flower 2cm deep			🟩	🟩	🟩 🟧 🟨	🟧 🟨	🟧 🟨					
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Nicotiana Sow in modules, cover with vermiculite and use a propagator or sunny windowsill		🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Nigella Sow in a tray and cover lightly with compost or sow and cover lightly in drills outside		🟩	🟩	🟩 🟧 🟨	🟧 🟨	🟧 🟨						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Orlaya grandiflora Sow in module trays indoors or direct outside and just cover the seed			🟩	🟩 🟧 🟨	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Pelargoniums Sow 0.5cm deep in trays and cover with sieved compost. Place in a warm place or propagator	🟩	🟩			🟧	🟧						🟩
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Poppies Sow on to well prepared soil. Doesn't need to be covered			🟨	🟨	🟨							
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			

🟩 Sow indoors 🟨 Sow outdoors 🟧 Plant out 🟪 Flowers

ORNAMENTALS (CONTINUED)		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Potentilla thurberi Sow in a cold frame, just covering the seed with sieved compost.				🟧	🟧	🟧			🟩	🟩		
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Primula vulgaris Surface sow in trays and cover with grit.		🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧							
				🟪	🟪	🟪							
	Pulsatilla vulgaris Sow in a cold frame, cover with sieved compost. Flowers the next year				🟧	🟧				🟩	🟩		
					🟪	🟪							
	Ricinus Soak seed and sow 6mm deep in individual pots. Use a heated propagator		🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Rudbeckia Sow 5mm deep in trays and keep at 20-25°C		🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Salvia viridis Sow indoors 0.3mm deep in trays, cover or direct where they are to flower in drills		🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟨🟧	🟧						
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Scabious Sow in a tray and cover lightly with compost			🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Snapdragon Sow in a tray, uncovered – use a lid or place in a greenhouse	🟩	🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Spanish flag Soak seed, sow under cover or direct 1.5cm deep		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟨🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Stipa tenuissima Surface sow in trays and cover with grit.	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Succulents Sow in a covered tray or propagator at 20°C		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧			
							🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Sunflowers Sow in individual pots at a depth equal to the height of the seed			🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Sweet pea Sow singly, 1cm deep into modules or a Rootrainer			🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Tagetes Sow in trays and cover with a thin layer of vermiculite		🟩	🟩		🟨🟧	🟨🟧						
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Tithonia Sow 2.5cm deep, individually in 8cm pots, or direct in prepared, raked soil		🟩	🟩		🟨🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Trees Sow in a pot and cover with sieved compost and a layer of grit. Leave outdoors				🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧	🟧🟩	🟩	🟩	
				🟪	🟪	🟪							
	Verbena bonariensis Sow indoors in trays and cover with compost. Use a heated propagator or sow direct.			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧					
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Wallflowers Sow in well-raked soil outside, just covering the seed with soil. Flowers the following year.					🟨	🟨	🟨			🟧	🟧	
				🟪	🟪	🟪							
	Zinnias Sow in modules, 6mm deep, to avoid root disturbance.				🟩	🟧🟨	🟧🟨						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		

🟩 Sow indoors 🟨 Sow outdoors 🟧 Plant out 🟪 Harvest

	VEGETABLES	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	Aubergines **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 40-45cm apart ⤡ 40-45cm between rows	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Beans, Broad **Sow** ↓ 5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 20cm apart ⤡ 20cm between rows	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧					🟧	🟧	
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪				
	Beans, French **Sow** ↓ 5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 45cm between rows				🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩					
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Beans, Runner **Sow** ↓ 5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 20cm apart ⤡ 60cm between rows				🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧					
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Beetroot **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 10cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩					
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Broccoli **Sow** ↓ 2cm **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 45cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧				
		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Cabbages **Sow** ↓ 2cm **Final spacing** ↔ 25-45cm apart ⤡ 30-60cm between rows			🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧	🟧		
		🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Carrots **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 5-8cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩					
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Cauliflower **Sow** ↓ 2cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 60cm between rows	🟩	🟩	🟨	🟨	🟨🟧	🟧				🟩	🟩	🟩
		🟪	🟪	🟪		🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Celeriac **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 45cm between rows			🟩	🟩		🟧						
		🟪	🟪	🟪							🟪	🟪	🟪
	Chicory **Sow** ↓ 1.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩	🟩	🟩			
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Chilli **Sow** ↓ 0.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Courgettes **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 90cm apart ⤡ 90cm between rows				🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Cucumbers **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 60cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧						
								🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
	Fennel **Sow** ↓ 1.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows				🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩					
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Globe Artichoke **Sow** ↓ 1.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 60cm apart ⤡ 90cm between rows			🟩🟧🟨	🟩🟧🟨								
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪			
	Kale **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 45cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟧					
		🟪	🟪	🟪						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Kohl Rabi **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 25cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟨	🟨🟧	🟨🟧	🟨					
						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Leeks **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟧					
		🟪	🟪						🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
	Lettuces **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 10-20cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩			
				🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	
	Onions **Sow** Leave tips showing **Final spacing** ↔ 10-15cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟩	🟩		🟧	🟧							🟩
							🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		

🟩 Sow indoors 🟨 Sow outdoors 🟧 Plant out 🟪 Harvest

VEGETABLES (CONTINUED)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Pak choi **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 20cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟨🟧 🟪	🟨🟧 🟪	🟨 🟪	🟨 🟪	🟪	🟪		
Parsnips **Sow** ↓ 1.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟪	🟪	🟩🟨	🟩🟨	🟩				🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
Peas **Sow** ↓ 3cm **Final spacing** ↔ 10cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	
Peppers **Sow** ↓ 0.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 60-75cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Pumpkins & squash **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 90cm apart ⤡ 90cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Radishes **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 2.5cm apart (winter 23cm apart) ⤡ 15cm between rows	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩	🟩🟨	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
Romanesco **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 60cm between rows				🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟧		🟪	🟪	🟪	
Salad leaves **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 15cm between rows	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨🟧 🟪	🟩🟨🟧 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
Spinach **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 7.5cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟨 🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪
Spring onions **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 2.5-5cm apart ⤡ 10cm between rows			🟩 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟨 🟪	🟨 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Sweetcorn **Sow** ↓ 2.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 45cm apart ⤡ 45cm between rows				🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Swiss chard **Sow** ↓ 1.5cm **Final spacing** ↔ 25-30cm apart ⤡ 40cm between rows	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧	🟩	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
Tomatoes **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 40cm apart ⤡ 40-60cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟧	🟧	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Turnips **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Final spacing** ↔ 15-23cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows for maincrop		🟩	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩🟨 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪

HERBS	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Basil **Sow** ↓ 0.5cm **Space** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩		🟧 🟪	🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪			
Chives **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 25cm between rows			🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧		🟪	🟪	🟪			
Coriander **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 25cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows						🟩🟧	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪
Dill **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 25cm apart ⤡ 25cm between rows				🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪			
Parsley **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows			🟩	🟩	🟩🟧	🟩🟧 🟪	🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪		
Sage **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 15cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪	🟪	🟩 🟪	🟩 🟪	🟪	🟪
Sorrel **Sow** ↓ 1cm **Space** ↔ 30cm apart ⤡ 30cm between rows		🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟩🟧 🟪	🟪	🟪			

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